1.24.22.

LIBRARY OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PRINCETON, N. J.

PRESENTED BY

Mrs. William Swan.

Division SCC

Section 10,644

SERMONS

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the most Reverend

Dr. *JOHN TILLOTSON*,

LATE

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

VOLUME *the* THIRD.

LONDON:

Printed for *R. Ware*, *A. Ward*, *J.* and *P. Knapton*, *T. Longman*, *R. Hett*, *C. Hitch*, *J. Hodges*, *S. Austen*, *J.* and *R. Tonson*, *J.* and *H. Pemberton*, and *J. Rivington*.

MDCCXLII.

SERMON XXXV.

Of the eternity of hell torments.

Preached before the Queen at Whitehall, March 7. $16\frac{8}{9}\frac{2}{0}$.

MATTH. xxv. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

SERM. XXXV.

AMONG all the arguments to repentance and a good life, those have the greatest force and power upon the minds of men, which are fetch'd from another world, and from the final state of good and bad men after this life. And this our SAVIOUR represents to us in a most lively manner, in that prospect which, in the latter part of this chapter, he gives us of the judgment of the great day, namely, that at the end of the world the "Son of "man shall come in his glory, with his holy angels, "and shall sit upon the throne of his glory; and all "nations shall be gathered before him," and shall be separated into two great companies, the righteous and the wicked; who shall stand the one on the right hand, and the other on the left of this great judge; who shall pronounce sentence severally upon them according to the actions which they have done in this life: the righteous shall be rewarded with eternal hap-

SERM. XXXV.

pineſs, and the wicked ſhall be ſentenced to everlaſting puniſhment. "And theſe," that is the wicked, "ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the "righteous into life eternal."

The words are plain and need no explication. For I take it for granted, that every one, at firſt hearing of them, does clearly apprehend the difference between the righteous and the wicked, and between endleſs happineſs and miſery: but although theſe words be ſo very eaſy to be underſtood, they can never be too much conſidered by us. The ſcope and deſign of them is, to repreſent to us the different fates of good and bad men in another world, and that their ends there will be as different as their ways and doings have been here in this world: the ſerious conſideration whereof is the greateſt diſcouragement to ſin, and the moſt powerful argument in the world to a holy and virtuous life: becauſe it is an argument taken from our greateſt and moſt laſting intereſt, our happineſs or our miſery to all eternity: a concernment of that vaſt conſequence, that it muſt be the greateſt ſtupidity and folly in the world for any man to neglect it.

This eternal ſtate of rewards and puniſhments in another world, our bleſſed SAVIOUR hath clearly revealed to us. And as to one part of it, viz. that good men ſhall be eternally happy in another world, every one gladly admits it: but many are loth that the other part ſhould be true, concerning the eternal puniſhment of wicked men. And therefore they pretend that it is contrary to the juſtice of GOD to puniſh temporary crimes with eternal torments: becauſe juſtice always obſerves a proportion between offences and

and punishments: but between temporary sins and eternal punishments there is no proportion. And as this seems hard to be reconciled with justice, so much more with that excess of goodness which we suppose to be in GOD. SERM. XXXV.

And therefore they say, that though GOD seem to have declared that impenitent sinners shall be everlastingly punished, yet these declarations of scripture are so to be mollified and understood, as that we may be able to reconcile them with the essential perfections of the divine nature.

This is the full force and strength of the objection. And my work at this time shall be to clear, if I can, this difficult point. And that for these two reasons. First, for the vindication of the divine justice and goodness: "that GOD may be justified in his sayings, "and appear righteous when he judgeth." And secondly, because the belief of the threatnings of GOD in their utmost extent is of so great moment to a good life, and so great a discouragement to sin: for the sting of sin is the terror of eternal punishment; and if men were once set free from the fear and belief of this, the most powerful restraint from sin would be taken away.

So that in answer to this objection, I shall endeavour to prove these two things.

First, that the eternal punishment of wicked men in another world is plainly threatned in scripture.

Secondly, that this is not inconsistent either with the justice or the goodness of GOD.

First, that the eternal punishment of wicked men in another world is plainly threatned in scripture, namely, in these following texts, Matth. xviii. 8.

"It

SERM. XXXV.

" It is better for thee to enter into life halt and maim-
" ed, than having two hands or two feet to be caſt
" into everlaſting fire." And Matth. xxv. 41.
" Depart, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for
" the devil and his angels." And here in the text,
" theſe," that is the wicked, " ſhall go away into ever-
" laſting puniſhment." And Mark ix. It is there three ſeveral times with great vehemency repeated by our SAVIOUR, " where their worm dieth not, and
" the fire is not quenched." And 2 Theſ. i. 9. ſpeaking of " them that know not GOD, and obey not the
" goſpel of his Son," it is ſaid of them, " who ſhall
" be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction."

I know very well that great endeavour hath been uſed to avoid the force of theſe texts, by ſhewing that the words, for ever and everlaſting, are frequently uſed in ſcripture in a more limited ſenſe, only for a long duration and continuance. Thus, for ever, doth very often in the old teſtament only ſignify for a long time and till the end of the jewiſh diſpenſation. And in the epiſtle of St. Jude, verſe 7th, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are ſaid to be " ſet
" forth for an example, ſuffering the vengeance of
" eternal fire;" that is, of a fire that was not extinguiſhed till thoſe cities were utterly conſumed.

And therefore to clear the meaning of the forementioned texts, firſt, I ſhall readily grant, that the words, for ever and everlaſting, do not always in ſcripture ſignify an endleſs duration; and that this is ſufficiently proved by the inſtances alledged to this purpoſe. But then, ſecondly, it cannot be denied on the other hand, that theſe words are often in ſcripture uſed in a larger ſenſe, and ſo as neceſſarily

to

to signify an interminable and endless duration. As where eternity is attributed to GOD, and he is said to "live for ever and ever:" and where eternal happiness in another world is promised to good men, and that "they shall be for ever with the LORD." Now the very same words and expressions are used concerning the punishment of wicked men in another life, and there is great reason why we should understand them in the same extent: both because if GOD had intended to have told us that the punishment of wicked men shall have no end, the languages wherein the scriptures are written do hardly afford fuller and more certain words, than those that are used in this case, whereby to express to us a duration without end: and likewise, which is almost a peremptory decision of the thing, because the duration of the punishment of wicked men is in the very same sentence expressed by the very same word which is used for the duration of the happiness of the righteous: as is evident from the text, "these," speaking of the wicked, "shall "go away, εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, into eternal punish- "ment, but the righteous, εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, into "life eternal." I proceed to the SERM. XXXV.

Second thing I proposed; namely, to shew that this is not inconsistent either with the justice or the goodness of GOD. For in this the force of the objection lies. And it hath been attempted to be answered several ways, none of which seems to me to give clear and full satisfaction to it.

First, it is said by some, that because sin is infinite in respect of the object against whom it is committed, which is GOD, therefore it deserves an infinite punishment.

But

SERM. XXXV.

But this I doubt will upon examination be found to have more of subtlety than of solidity in it. 'Tis true indeed, that the dignity of the person against whom any offence is committed is a great aggravation of the fault. For which reason all offences against God are certainly the greatest of all other. But that crimes should hereby be heightened to an infinite degree can by no means be admitted; and that for this plain reason; because then the evil and demerit of all sins must necessarily be equal; for the demerit of no sin can be more than infinite: and if the demerit of all sins be equal, there can then be no reason for the degrees of punishment in another world: but to deny that there are degrees of punishment there, is not only contrary to reason, but to our SAVIOUR's express assertion, that some shall be "beaten with many "stripes" and some with "fewer," and that it shall be "more tolerable for some in the day of judgment" than for others. Besides, that by the same reason that the least sin that is committed against GOD may be said to be infinite because of it's object, the least punishment that is inflicted by GOD may be said to be infinite because of it's author; and then all punishments from GOD as well as all sins against him would be equal; which is palpably absurd. So that this answer is by no means sufficient to break the force of this objection.

Secondly, it is said by others, that if wicked men lived for ever in this world they would sin for ever, and therefore they deserve to be punished for ever. But this hath neither truth nor reason enough in it to give satisfaction. For who can certainly tell that if a man lived never so long he would never repent and grow better? Besides,

Beſides, that the juſtice of GOD doth only puniſh the ſins which men have committed in this life, and not thoſe which they might poſſibly have committed if they had lived longer.

Thirdly, it is ſaid in the laſt place, that GOD hath ſet before men everlaſting happineſs and miſery, and the ſinner hath his choice. Here are two things ſaid which ſeem to bid fairly towards an anſwer.

Firſt, that the reward which GOD promiſeth to our obedience is equal to the puniſhment which he threatens to our diſobedience. But yet this I doubt will not reach the buſineſs: becauſe though it be not contrary to juſtice to exceed in rewards, that being matter of meer favour; yet it may be ſo, to exceed in puniſhments.

Secondly, it is further ſaid, that the ſinner in this caſe has nothing to complain of, ſince he hath his own choice. This I confeſs is enough to ſilence the ſinner, and to make him to acknowledge that his deſtruction is of himſelf; but yet for all that, it does not ſeem ſo clearly to ſatisfy the objection from the diſproportion between the fault and the puniſhment.

And therefore I ſhall endeavour to clear, if it may be, this matter yet a little further by theſe following conſiderations.

Firſt, let it be conſidered, that the meaſure of penalties with reſpect to crimes is not only, nor always, to be taken from the quality and degree of the offence, much leſs from the duration and continuance of it, but from the ends and reaſons of government; which require ſuch penalties as may, if it be poſſible, ſecure the obſervation of the law, and deter men from the breach of it. And the reaſon of this is evident,

SERM. XXXV.

becauſe if it were once declared that no man ſhould ſuffer longer for any crime than according to the proportion of the time in which it was committed, the conſequence of this would be, that ſinners would be better huſbands of their time, and ſin ſo much the faſter, that they might have the greater bargain of it, and might ſatisfy for their ſins by a ſhorter puniſhment.

And it would be unreaſonable likewiſe upon another account; becauſe ſome of the greateſt ſins may perhaps be committed in the ſhorteſt time; for inſtance, murther; the act whereof may be over in a moment, but the effects of it are perpetual. For he that kills a man once kills him for ever. The act of murther may be committed in a trice, but the injury is endleſs and irreparable. So that this objection of temporary crimes being puniſhed with ſo much longer ſufferings is plainly of no force.

Beſides that, whoever conſiders how ineffectual the threatning even of eternal torments is to the greateſt part of ſinners, will ſoon be ſatisfied that a leſs penalty than that of eternal ſufferings would, to the far greateſt part of mankind, have been in all probability of little or no force. And therefore if any thing more terrible than eternal vengeance could have been threatned to the workers of iniquity, it had not been unreaſonable, becauſe it would all have been little enough to deter men effectually from ſin.

So that what proportion crimes and penalties ought to bear to each other, is not ſo properly a conſideration of juſtice, as of wiſdom and prudence in the lawgiver.

And

SERM. XXXV.

And the reaſon of this ſeems very plain, becauſe the meaſure of penalties is not taken from any ſtrict proportion betwixt crimes and puniſhments; but from one great end and deſign of government, which is to ſecure the obſervation of wholeſom and neceſſary laws; and conſequently whatever penalties are proper and neceſſary to this end are not unjuſt.

And this conſideration I deſire may be more eſpecially obſerved, becauſe it ſtrikes at the very foundation of the objection. For if the appointing and apportioning of penalties to crimes be not ſo properly a conſideration of juſtice, but rather of prudence in the lawgiver; then whatever the diſproportion may be between temporary ſins and eternal ſufferings juſtice cannot be ſaid to be concerned in it.

Juſtice indeed is concerned, that the righteous and the wicked ſhould not be treated alike; and farther yet, that greater ſins ſhould have a heavier puniſhment, and that mighty ſinners ſhould be mightily tormented; but all this may be conſidered and adjuſted in the degree and the intenſeneſs of the ſuffering, without making any difference in the duration of it.

The caſe then in ſhort ſtands thus. Whenever we break the laws of GOD we fall into his hands and lie at his mercy, and he may without injuſtice inflict what puniſhment upon us he pleaſeth: and conſequently, to ſecure his law from violation, he may beforehand threaten what penalties he thinks fit and neceſſary to deter men from the tranſgreſſion of it. And this is not eſteemed unjuſt among men, to puniſh crimes that are committed in an inſtant with the perpetual loſs of eſtate, or liberty, or life.

SERM. XXXV.

Secondly, this will yet appear more reasonable when we consider, that after all, he that threatens hath still the power of execution in his own hands. For there is this remarkable difference between promises and threatnings, that he who promiseth passeth over a right to another, and thereby stands obliged to him in justice and faithfulness to make good his promise; and if he do not, the party to whom the promise is made is not only disappointed but injuriously dealt withal: but in threatning it is quite otherwise. He that threatens keeps the right of punishing in his own hand, and is not obliged to execute what he hath threatned any further than the reasons and ends of government do require: and he may without any injury to the party threatned remit and abate as much as he pleaseth of the punishment that he hath threatned: and because in so doing he is not worse but better than his word, no body can find fault, or complain of any wrong or injustice thereby done to him.

Nor is this any impeachment of God's truth and faithfulness, any more than it is esteemed among men a piece of falshood not to do what they have threatned. God did absolutely threaten the destruction of the city of Niniveh, and his peevish prophet did understand the threatning to be absolute, and was very angry with God for employing him in a message that was not made good. But God understood his own right, and did what he pleased notwithstanding the threatning he had denounced, and for all Jonah was so touched in honour that he had rather have died himself than that Niniveh should not have been destroyed, only to have verified his message.

I know

SERM. XXXV.

I know it is ſaid in this caſe, that GOD hath confirmed theſe threatnings by an oath, which is a certain ſign of the immutability of his counſel; and therefore his truth is concerned in the ſtrict and rigorous execution of them. The land of Canaan was a type of heaven, and the Iſraelites who rebelled in the wilderneſs were alſo a type of impenitent ſinners under the goſpel; conſequently the oath of GOD concerning the rebellious Iſraelites, when "he ſware "in his wrath that they ſhould not enter into his "reſt," that is, into the land of Canaan, doth equally oblige him to execute his threatning upon all impenitent ſinners under the goſpel, that "they ſhall "never enter into the kingdom of GOD." And this is very truly reaſoned, ſo far as the threatning extends; which if we attend to the plain words of it, beyond which threatnings are never to be ſtretched, doth not ſeem to reach any further than to the excluſion of impenitent ſinners out of heaven, and their falling finally ſhort of the reſt and happineſs of the righteous: which, however, directly overthrows the opinion aſcribed to Origen, that the devils and wicked men ſhall all be ſaved at laſt; GOD having "ſworn in "his wrath that they ſhall never enter into his reſt."

But then, as to the eternal miſery and puniſhment threatned to wicked men in the other world, though it be not neceſſarily comprehended in this oath that they "ſhall not enter into his reſt;" yet we are to conſider, that both the tenor of the ſentence which our bleſſed SAVIOUR hath aſſured us will be paſſed upon them at the judgment of the great day, "depart "ye curſed into everlaſting fire;" and likewiſe this declaration in the text, that "the wicked ſhall

"go

SERM. XXXV.

" go away into everlasting punishment," though they do not restrain GOD from doing what he pleases, yet they cut off from the sinner all reasonable hopes of the relaxation or mitigation of them. For since the great judge of the world hath made so plain and express a declaration, and will certainly pass such a sentence, it would be the greatest folly and madness in the world for the sinner to entertain any hope of escaping it, and to venture his soul upon that hope.

I know but one thing more, commonly said upon this argument, that seems material, and that is this; that the words death and destruction and perishing, whereby the punishment of wicked men in the other world is most frequently expressed in scripture, do most properly import annihilation and an utter end of being; and therefore may reasonably be so understood in the matter of which we are now speaking.

To this I answer, that these words, and those which answer them in other languages, are often, both in scripture and other authors, used to signify a state of great misery and suffering, without the utter extinction of the miserable. Thus GOD is often in scripture said to bring destruction upon a nation when he sends great judgments upon them, though they do not exterminate and make an utter end of them.

And nothing is more common in most languages, than by perishing to express a person's being undone and made very miserable. As in that known passage in Tiberius his letter to the Roman senate, * " let all

* Ita me dii deæque omnes pejùs perdant quàm hodie perire me sentio, &c.

" the gods and goddeſſes, ſaith he, deſtroy me worſe SERM.
" than at this very time I feel my ſelf to periſh, &c." XXXV.
in which ſaying, the words, deſtroy and periſh, are both of them uſed to expreſs the miſerable anguiſh and torment which at that time he felt in his mind, as Tacitus tells us at large.

And as for the word death; a ſtate of miſery, which is as bad or worſe than death, may properly enough be called by that name: and for this reaſon the puniſhment of wicked men after the day of judgment is in the book of the revelation ſo frequently and fitly called " the ſecond death." And " the lake of fire," into Rev. xx.
which the wicked ſhall be caſt to be tormented in it, 14.
is expreſly called " the ſecond death."

But beſides this, they that argue from the force of theſe words, that the puniſhment of wicked men in the other world ſhall be nothing elſe but an utter end of their being, do neceſſarily fall into two great inconveniences.

Firſt, that hereby they exclude all poſitive puniſhment and torment of ſinners. For if the ſecond death, and to be deſtroyed, and to periſh, ſignify nothing elſe but the annihilation of ſinners, and an utter extinction of their being; and if this be all the effect of that dreadful ſentence which ſhall be paſſed upon them at the day of judgment, then the fire of hell is quenched all at once, and is only a frightful metaphor without any meaning. But this is directly contrary to the tenor of ſcripture, which doth ſo often deſcribe the puniſhment of wicked men in hell by poſitive torments: and particularly our bleſſed SAVIOUR, deſcribing the lamentable ſtate of the damned in hell, expreſly ſays, that " there ſhall be weeping

" and

SERM. XXXV.

" and wailing and gnashing of teeth ;" which cannot be, if annihilation be all the meaning and effect of the sentence of the great day.

Secondly, another inconvenience of this opinion is, that if annihilation be all the punishment of sinners in the other world, then the punishment of all sinners must of necessity be equal, because there are no degrees of annihilation or not-being. But this also is most directly contrary to scripture, as I have already shewn.

I know very well that some who are of this opinion do allow a very long and tedious time of the most terrible and intolerable torment of sinners, and after that they believe that there shall be an utter end of their being.

But then they must not argue this from the force of the words before mentioned, because the plain inference from thence is, that annihilation is all the punishment that wicked men shall undergo in the next life ; and if that be not true, as I have plainly shewn that it is not, I do not see from what other words or expressions in scripture they can find the least ground for this opinion, that the torment of wicked men shall at last end in their annihilation. And yet admitting all this, for which I think there is no ground at all in scripture, I cannot see what great comfort sinners can take in the thought of a tedious time of terrible torment, ending at last in annihilation, and the utter extinction of their beings.

Thirdly, we may consider further, that the primary end of all threatnings is not punishment, but the prevention of it. For God does not threaten that men may sin and be punished, but that they may not

not ſin, and ſo may eſcape the puniſhment threatned. And therefore the higher the threatning runs, ſo much the more mercy and goodneſs there is in it; becauſe it is ſo much the more likely to hinder men from incurring the penalty that is threatned. SERM. XXXV.

Fourthly, let it be conſidered likewiſe, that when it is ſo very plain that GOD hath threatned eternal miſery to impenitent ſinners, all the prudence in the world obliges men to believe that he is in good earneſt, and will execute theſe threatnings upon them, if they will obſtinately ſtand it out with him, and will not be brought to repentance. And therefore in all reaſon we ought ſo to demean our ſelves, and ſo to perſuade others, as knowing the terror of the LORD, and that they who wilfully break his laws are in danger of eternal death. To which I will add in the

Fifth and laſt place, that if we ſuppoſe that GOD did intend that his threatnings ſhould have their effect to deter men from the breach of his laws, it cannot be imagined that in the ſame revelation, which declares theſe threatnings, any intimation ſhould be given of the abatement or non-execution of them. For by this GOD would have weakened his own laws, and have taken off the edge and terror of his threatnings: becauſe a threatning hath quite loſt it's force, if we once come to believe that it will not be executed: and conſequently, it would be a very impious deſign to go about to teach or perſuade any thing to the contrary, and a betraying men into that miſery, which had it been firmly believed might have been avoided.

SERM. XXXV.

We are all bound to preach, and you and I are all bound to believe the terrors of the LORD. Not so, as saucily to determine and pronounce what GOD must do in this case; for after all, he may do what he will, as I have clearly shewn: but what is fit for us to do, and what we have reason to expect, if notwithstanding a plain and express threatning of "the vengeance "of eternal fire," we still go on to "treasure up to "our selves wrath against the day of wrath, and the "revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD;" and will desperately put it to the hazard, whether, and how far GOD will execute his threatnings upon sinners in another world.

And therefore there is no need why we should be very solicitously concerned for the honour of GOD's justice or goodness in this matter. Let us but take care to believe and avoid the threatnings of GOD; and then, how terrible soever they are, no harm can come to us. And as for GOD, let us not doubt but that he will take care of his own honour; and that he, "who is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his "works," will do nothing that is repugnant to his eternal goodness and righteousness; and that he will certainly so manage things at the judgment of the great day, as "to be justified in his sayings, and to "be righteous when we are judged." For, notwithstanding his threatnings, he hath reserved power enough in his own hands to do right to all his perfections: so that we may rest assured, that he will "judge the world in righteousness;" and if it be any wise inconsistent either with righteousness or goodness, which he knows much better than we do, to make sinners miserable for ever, that he will not do it; nor

is

is it credible, that he would threaten ſinners with a pu- SERM. XXXV.
niſhment which he could not juſtly execute upon them.

Therefore ſinners ought always to be afraid of it, and reckon upon it: and always to remember, that there is great goodneſs and mercy in the ſeverity of God's threatnings; and that nothing will more juſtify the infliction of eternal torments, than the fooliſh preſumption of ſinners in venturing upon them, notwithſtanding ſuch plain and terrible threatnings.

This, I am ſure, is a good argument to all of us, to "work out our ſalvation with fear and trem- "bling;" and with all poſſible care to endeavour the prevention of that miſery which is ſo terribly ſevere, that at preſent we can hardly tell how to reconcile it with the juſtice and goodneſs of God.

This God heartily deſires we would do, and hath ſolemnly ſworn, that "he hath no pleaſure in the "death of the wicked, but rather that he ſhould "turn from his wickedneſs and live." So that here is all imaginable care taken to prevent our miſcarriage, and all the aſſurance that the God of truth can give us of his unwillingneſs to bring this miſery upon us. And both theſe, I am ſure, are arguments of great goodneſs. For what can goodneſs do more, than to warn us of this miſery, and earneſtly perſuade us to prevent it; and to threaten us ſo very terribly, on purpoſe to deter us from ſo great a danger?

And if this will not prevail with us, but we will ſtill go on to "deſpiſe the riches of God's goodneſs, "and long ſuffering, and forbearance;" what in reaſon remains for us, "but a fearful looking for of

SERM. XXXV.

" judgment and fiery indignation to consume us?" And what almost can justice, or even goodness it self do less, than to inflict that punishment upon us, which with eyes open we would wilfully run upon; and which no warning, no persuasion, no importunity could prevail with us to avoid? And when, as the apostle says, " knowing the judgment of GOD, that " they which commit such things are worthy of " death;" yet for all that, we would venture to commit them.

And therefore, whatever we suffer, we do but inherit our own choice, and have no reason to complain of GOD, who hath set before us life and death, eternal happiness and misery, and hath left us to be the carvers of our own fortune: and if, after all this, we will obstinately refuse this happiness, and wilfully run upon this misery, " wo unto us! for we have " rewarded evil to our selves."

You see then, by all that hath been said upon this argument, what we have all reason to expect, if we will still go on in our sins, and will not be brought to repentance. You have heard, what a terrible punishment the just GOD hath threatned to the workers of iniquity: and that in as plain words as can be used to express any thing. " These," that is the wicked, " shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the " righteous into life eternal."

Here are life and death, happiness and misery set before us. Not this frail and mortal life, which is hardly worth the having, were it not in order to a better and happier life; nor a temporal death, to get above the dread whereof should not methinks be difficult to us, were it not for the bitter and terrible consequences

ſequences of it: but an eternal life, and an eternal enjoyment of all things which can render life pleaſant and happy; and a perpetual death, which will for ever torment us, but never make an end of us.

Theſe God propounds to our choice: and if the conſideration of them will not prevail with us to leave our ſins, and to reform our lives, what will? Weightier motives cannot be propoſed to the underſtanding of man, than everlaſting puniſhment, and life eternal; than the greateſt and moſt durable happineſs, and the moſt intolerable and laſting miſery that human nature is capable of.

Now, conſidering in what terms the threatnings of the goſpel are expreſſed, we have all the reaſon in the world to believe that the puniſhment of ſinners in another world will be everlaſting. However, we cannot be certain of the contrary, time enough to prevent it; not till we come there, and find by experience how it is: and if it prove ſo, it will then be too late either to prevent that terrible doom, or to get it revers'd.

Some comfort themſelves with the uncomfortable and uncertain hope of being diſcharged out of being, and reduced to their firſt nothing: at leaſt after the tedious and terrible ſuffering of the moſt grievous and exquiſite torments for innumerable ages. And if this ſhould happen to be true, good God! how feeble, how cold a comfort is this? Where is the reaſon and underſtanding of men, to make this their laſt refuge and hope; and to lean upon it as a matter of mighty conſolation, that they ſhall be miſerable beyond all imagination, and beyond all patience, for God knows how many ages? "Have all the workers

"of

SERM. XXXV.

" of iniquity no knowledge?" No right ſenſe and judgment of things? No conſideration and care of themſelves, no concernment for their own laſting intereſt and happineſs?

Origen, I know not for what good reaſon, is ſaid to have been of opinion, that the puniſhment of devils and wicked men, after the day of judgment, will continue but for a thouſand years; and that after that time, they ſhall all be finally ſaved. I can very hardly perſuade my ſelf, that ſo wiſe and learned a man as Origen was ſhould be poſitive in an opinion for which there can be no certain ground in reaſon, eſpecially for the punctual and preciſe term of a thouſand years; and for which there is no ground at all, that I know of, from divine revelation.

But upon the whole matter, however it be; be it for a thouſand years, or be it for a longer and unknown term, or be it for ever, which is plainly threatned in the goſpel: I ſay, however it be, this is certain, that it is infinitely wiſer to take care to avoid it, than to diſpute it, and to run the final hazard of it. Put it which way we will, eſpecially if we put it at the worſt, as in all prudence we ought to do, it is by all poſſible means to be provided againſt: So terrible, ſo intolerable is the thought, yea, the very leaſt ſuſpicion of being miſerable for ever.

And now give me leave to aſk you, as St. Paul did king Agrippa, " Do you believe the ſcriptures?" And I hope I may anſwer for you my ſelf, as he did for Agrippa, " I know you do believe them." And in them theſe things are clearly revealed, and are part of that creed of which we make a ſolemn profeſſion every day.

SERM. XXXV.

And yet when we consider how most men live, is it credible that they do firmly believe this plain declaration of our SAVIOUR and our judge, that "the "wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, "but the righteous into life eternal?"

Or if they do in some sort believe it, is it credible that they do at all consider it seriously, and lay it to heart? So that if we have a mind to reconcile our belief with our actions, we must either alter our bible and our creed, or we must change our lives.

Let us then "consider, and shew our selves men." And if we do so, can any man to please himself for a little while be contented to be punished for ever; and for the shadow of a short and imperfect happiness in this life, be willing to run the hazard of being really and eternally miserable in the next world?

Surely this consideration alone, of the extreme and endless misery of impenitent sinners in another world, if it were but well wrought into our minds, would be sufficient to kill all the temptations of this world, and to lay them dead at our feet; and to make us deaf to all the enchantments of sin and vice: because they bid us so infinitely to our loss, when they offer us the enjoyment of a short pleasure, upon so very hard and unequal a condition as that of being miserable for ever.

The eternal rewards and punishments of another life, which are the great sanction and security of GOD's laws, one would think should be a sufficient weight to cast the scales against any pleasure, or any pain, that this world can tempt, or threaten us withal.

And yet, after all this, will we still go on to do wickedly; when "we know the terrors of the LORD,"

and

SERM. XXXV.

and that we must one day answer all our bold violations of his law, and contempts of his authority, with the loss of our immortal souls, and by "suffering the "vengeance of eternal fire?

What is it then that can give men the heart and courage; but I recal that word, because it is not true courage but fool-hardiness, thus to out-brave the judgment of God, and to set at nought the horrible and amazing consideration of a miserable eternity? How is it possible that men that are awake, and in their wits, should have any ease in their minds, or enjoy so much as one quiet hour, whilst so great a danger hangs over their heads, and they have taken no tolerable care to prevent it? If we have any true and just sense of this danger, we cannot fail to shew that we have it, by making haste to escape it, and by taking that care of our souls, which is due to immortal spirits that are made to be happy or miserable to all eternity.

Let us not therefore estimate and measure things, as they appear now to our sensual and deluded and depraved judgments; but let us open our eyes, and look to the last issue and consequence of them: let us often think of these things, and consider well with our selves, what apprehensions will then probably fill and possess our minds, when we shall stand trembling before our judge, in a fearful expectation of that terrible sentence which is just ready to be pronounced, and as soon as ever it is pronounced, to be executed upon us: when we shall have a full and clear sight of the unspeakable happiness, and of the horrible and astonishing miseries of another world: when there shall be no longer any veil of flesh and sense to interpose

pose between them and us, and to hide these things from our eyes: and, in a word, when heaven, with all the glories of it, shall be open to our view; and, as the expression is in Job, "hell shall be naked before us, and destruction shall have no covering." SERM. XXXV.

How shall we then be confounded, to find the truth and reality of those things which we will not now be persuaded to believe? And how shall we then wish, that we had believed "the terrors of the LORD;" and instead of quarrelling with the principles of religion, and calling them into question, we had lived under the constant sense and awe of them?

Blessed be GOD, that there is yet hope concerning us, and that we may yet "flee from the wrath to "come;" and that the miseries of eternity may yet be prevented in time: and that for this very end and purpose, our most gracious and merciful GOD hath so clearly revealed these things to us, not with a desire to bring them upon us, but that we, being warned by his threatnings, might not bring them upon our selves.

I will conclude all with the counsel of the wise man; "seek not death in the error of your life, and "pull not upon your selves destruction with the "works of your own hands. For GOD made not "death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction "of the living: but ungodly men with their works "and words have called it down upon themselves." Which that none of us may do, GOD of his infinite goodness grant, for his mercies sake in JESUS CHRIST: to whom, with thee, O Father, and the holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, thanksgiving and praise, both now and for ever. Amen. Wisd. of Solomon, ch. i. ver. 12, 13, 16.

SERMON XXXVI.

Succeſs not always anſwerable to the probability of ſecond cauſes.

Being a faſt-ſermon preached before the Houſe of Commons, on Wedneſday, April 16, 1690.

ECCLESIASTES ix. 11.

I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong, nor yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of ſkill, but time and chance happeneth to them all.

SERM. XXXVI.

NEXT to the acknowledgment of GOD's being, nothing is more eſſential to religion, than the belief of his providence, and a conſtant dependance upon him, as the great governor of the world, and the wiſe diſpoſer of all the affairs and concernments of the children of men: and nothing can be a greater argugument of providence, than that there is ſuch an order of cauſes laid in nature, that in ordinary courſe every thing does uſually attain it's end; and yet that there is ſuch a mixture of contingency, as that now and then we cannot tell how nor why, the moſt likely cauſes do deceive us, and fail of producing their uſual effects.

For

For if there be a GOD and a providence, it is reasonable that things should be thus: because a providence does suppose all things to have been at first wisely framed, and with a fitness to attain their end; but yet it does also suppose that GOD hath reserved to himself a power and liberty to interpose, and to cross as he pleases, the usual course of things; to awaken men to the consideration of him, and a continual dependance upon him; and to teach us to ascribe those things to his wise disposal, which, if we never saw any change, we should be apt to impute to blind necessity. And therefore the wise-man, to bring us to an acknowledgment of the divine providence, tells us, that thus he had observed things to be in this world; that though they generally happen according to the probability of second causes, yet sometimes they fall out quite otherwise, "I returned, "and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the "swift, nor the battle to the strong, &c."

The connexion of which words with the foregoing discourse, is briefly this. Among many other observations, which the wise preacher makes in this sermon, of the vanity and uncertainty of all things in this world, and of the mistakes of men about them, he takes notice here in the text, and in the verse before it, of two extremes of human life: some, because of the uncertainty of all worldly things, cast off all care and diligence, and neglect the use of proper and probable means, having found by experience, that when men have done all they can, they many times fail of their end, and are disappointed they know not how: others, on the contrary, rely so much upon their own skill and industry, as to promise success to

SERM. XXXVI.

themſelves in all their undertakings; and preſume ſo much upon ſecond cauſes, as if no conſideration at all were to be had of the firſt.

The wiſe preacher reproves both theſe extremes, and ſhews the folly and vanity of them. On the one hand, of thoſe who ſit ſtill, and will uſe no care and endeavour, becauſe it may all happen to be diſappointed, and to fail of ſucceſs: not conſidering, that though prudent care and diligence will not always do the buſineſs, yet there is nothing to be done without them, in the ordinary courſe of things; and that, in the order of ſecond cauſes, theſe are the moſt likely and effectual means to any end: and therefore, rejecting this lazy principle, he counſels men, whatever they propoſe to themſelves, to be very diligent and vigorous in the uſe of proper means for the attainment of it, in the verſe immediately before the text, "whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with "thy might."

But then he obſerves alſo, as great a folly and vanity on the other hand; that they, who manage their affairs with great wiſdom and induſtry, are apt to preſume and reckon upon the certain ſucceſs of them, without taking into conſideration that which in all human affairs is moſt conſiderable, the favour and bleſſing of that almighty and wiſe providence which rules the world; "I returned, ſays he, and ſaw un-"der the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor "the battle to the ſtrong, &c."

"I returned and ſaw;" that is, having conſidered on the one hand the folly of ſloth and careleſsneſs, I turned mine eyes the other way, and ſaw as great an error on the other hand; in mens preſuming too much

much upon their own diligence and conduct, without taking notice of the providence of GOD. For I have found, says Solomon, by manifold observations, that the success of things does not always answer the probability of second causes and means. So that the sum of the preacher's advice is this: when thou propoundest any end to thy self, be diligent and vigorous in the use of means; and when thou hast done all, look above and beyond these to a superior cause which over-rules, and steers, and stops, as he pleases, all the motions and activity of second causes: and be not confident that all things are ever so wisely and firmly laid, that they cannot fail of success. For the providence of GOD doth many times step in to divert the most probable event of things, and to turn it quite another way: and whenever he pleaseth to do so, the most strong and likely means do fall lame, or stumble, or by some accident or other come short of their end. SERM. XXXVI.

"I returned, and saw under the sun," that is, here below, in this inferior world.

"That the race is not to the swift:" this the Chaldee paraphrast does understand with relation to warlike affairs, "I beheld, says he, and saw, that they "who are swift as eagles do not always escape in the "day of battle." But I chuse rather to understand the words in their more obvious sense, that in a race many things may happen to hinder him that is swiftest from winning it.

"Nor the battle to the strong;" that is, victory and success in war do not always attend the greatest force and preparations, nor doth that side, which in human estimation is strongest, always prevail and get the better.

"Nor

SERM. XXXVI.

" Nor yet bread to the wiſe ;" *neque doctorum panem eſſe*, ſo ſome render the words, that learned men are not always ſecured againſt poverty and want.

" Nor yet riches to men of underſtanding ;" for ſo ſome interpreters tranſlate the words, *neque induſtriis divitias eſſe*, that thoſe who take moſt pains do not always get the greateſt eſtates.

" Nor yet favour to men of ſkill ;" that is, to thoſe who underſtand men and buſineſs, and how to apply themſelves dextrouſly to the inclinations and intereſts of princes and great men. Others interpret theſe words more generally, *neque peritorum artificum eſſe gratiam*, that thoſe who excel moſt in their ſeveral arts and profeſſions do not always meet with ſuitable encouragement: but becauſe the word, which is here rendered favour, is ſo frequently uſed by Solomon for the favour of princes, the former ſenſe ſeems to be more eaſy and natural.

" But time and chance happeneth to them all ;" that is, ſaith Aben Ezra, there is a ſecret providence of GOD which ſometimes preſents men with unexpected opportunities, and interpoſeth accidents which no human wiſdom could foreſee: which gives ſucceſs to very unlikely means; and defeats the ſwift, and the ſtrong, and the learned, and the induſtrious, and them that are beſt verſed in men and buſineſs, of their ſeveral ends and deſigns.

It ſometimes happens, that he that is ſwifteſt, by a fall, or by fainting, or by ſome other unlucky accident, may loſe the race.

It ſometimes falls out, that a much ſmaller and weaker number, by the advantage of ground, or of a paſs; by a ſtratagem, or by a ſudden ſurpriſe, or by

by some other accident and opportunity, may be victorious over a much greater force. SERM. XXXVI.

And that an unlearned man, in comparison, by favour, or friends, or by some happy chance of setting out to the best advantage the little learning he has before one that hath less, may arrive at great things; when perhaps at the same time, the man that is a hundred times more learned than he, may be ready to starve.

And that men of no great parts and industry may stumble into an estate, and by some casual hit in trade may attain such a fortune, as the man that hath toiled and drudged all his life shall never be able to reach.

And lastly, that a man of no great ambition or design may fall into an opportunity, and by happening upon the *mollia tempora fandi*, some soft and lucky season of address, may slide into his prince's favour, and all on the sudden be hoisted up to that degree of dignity and esteem, as the designing man, who hath been laying trains to blow up his rivals, and waiting opportunities all his days to worm others out, and to skrew himself in, shall never be able to attain.

The words thus explained contain this general proposition, which shall be the subject of my following discourse,

That in human affairs the most likely means do not always attain their end, nor does the event constantly answer the probability of second causes; but there is a secret providence which governs and overrules all things, and does, when it pleases, interpose to defeat the most hopeful and probable designs.

SERM. XXXVI.

In the handling of this propoſition I ſhall do theſe three things.

Firſt, I ſhall confirm and illuſtrate the truth of it, by an induction of the particulars which are inſtanced in, here in text.

Secondly, I ſhall give ſome reaſon and account of this, why the providence of GOD doth ſometimes interpoſe to hinder and defeat the moſt probable deſigns.

Thirdly, I ſhall draw ſome inferences from the whole, ſuitable to the occaſion of this day. In all which I ſhall endeavour to be as brief as conveniently I can.

Firſt, for the confirmation and illuſtration of this propoſition, that the moſt likely means do not always attain their end; but there is a ſecret providence which over-rules and governs all events, and does, when it pleaſes, interpoſe to defeat the moſt probable and hopeful deſigns. This is the general concluſion which Solomon proves by this induction of particulars in the text. And he inſtanceth in the moſt probable means for the compaſſing of the ſeveral ends which moſt men in this world propoſe to themſelves. And the great darlings of mankind are victory, riches, and honour: I do not mention pleaſure, becauſe that ſeems rather to reſult from the uſe and enjoyment of the other. Now if a man deſign victory, what more probable means to overcome in a race than ſwiftneſs? What more likely to prevail in war than ſtrength? If a man aim at riches, what more proper to raiſe an eſtate than underſtanding and induſtry? If a man aſpire to honour, what more likely to prefer him to the king's favour and ſervice than

than dexterity and skill in business? And yet experience shews that these means, as probable as they seem to be, are not always successful for the accomplishment of their several ends. SERM. XXXVI.

Or else we may suppose that Solomon by these instances did intend to represent the chief engines and instruments of human designs and actions. Now there are five things more especially, which do eminently qualify a man for any undertaking; expedition and quickness of dispatch; strength and force; providence and forecast; diligence and industry; knowledge, and insight into men and business: and some think that Solomon did intend to represent these several qualities by the several instances in the text. "The race is not to the swift," that is, men of the greatest expedition and dispatch do not always succeed: for we see that men do sometimes out-run business, and make haste to be undone. "Nor the battle to the strong," that is, neither does force and strength always carry it. "Nor yet bread to the "wise;" which some understand of the provident care and pains of the husbandman, whose harvest is not always answerable to his labour and hopes. "Nor "yet riches to men of understanding," or industry; that is, neither is diligence in business always crowned with success. "Nor yet favour to men of skill," that is, neither have they that have the greatest dexterity in the management of affairs always the fortune to rise. And if we take the words in this sense, the thing will come much to one: but I rather approve the first interpretation, as being less forced and nearer to the letter.

SERM. XXXVI.

So that the force of Solomon's reaſoning is this. If the ſwifteſt do not always win the race; nor the ſtrongeſt always overcome in war: If knowledge and learning do not always ſecure men from want; nor induſtry always make men rich; nor political ſkill always raiſe men to high place; nor any other means that can be inſtanced in as moſt probable, do conſtantly and infallibly ſucceed: then it muſt be acknowledged that there is ſome other cauſe which mingles it ſelf with human affairs and governs all events; and which can, and does when it pleaſes, defeat the moſt likely, and bring to paſs the moſt improbable deſigns: and what elſe can that be imagined to be, but the ſecret and over-ruling providence of almighty GOD? When we can find no other, we are very unreaſonable if we will not admit this to be the cauſe of ſuch extraordinary events, but will obſtinately impute that to blind neceſſity or chance, which hath ſuch plain characters upon it of a divine power and wiſdom.

I might be large upon every one of theſe inſtances in the text, and illuſtrate them by pat and lively examples both out of ſcripture and other hiſtories. But I ſhall briefly paſs over all of them, but the ſecond, "the battle is not to the ſtrong."

". The race is not to the ſwift." If we underſtand this literally, it is obvious to every man to imagine a great many accidents in a race, which may ſnatch victory from the ſwifteſt runner. If we underſtand it, as the Chaldee paraphraſe does, with relation to war, that the ſwifteſt does not always overcome or eſcape in the day of battle; of this Aſahel is an eminent inſtance, who though he was, as the ſcripture tells

tells us, " light of foot as a wild roe," yet did he not eſcape the ſpear of Abner. It ſeems that among the ancients, ſwiftneſs was looked upon as a great qualification in a warrior, both becauſe it ſerves for a ſudden aſſault and onſet, and likewiſe for that which in civility we call a nimble retreat. And therefore David in his poetical lamentation over thoſe two great captains, Saul and Jonathan, takes particular notice of this warlike quality of theirs; " they were," ſays he, " ſwifter than eagles, ſtronger than lions:" and the conſtant character which Homer gives of Achilles, one of his principal heroes, is, that " he was ſwift of foot:" the poet feigns of him, that by ſome charm or gift of the gods he was invulnerable in all parts of his body except his heel; and that was the part to which he truſted; and in that he received his mortal wound: the wiſe poet hereby inſtructing us, that many times our greateſt danger lies there, where we place our chief confidence and ſafety. SERM. XXXVI.

" Nor yet bread to the wiſe," or to the learned. The poverty of poets is proverbial; and there are frequent inſtances in hiſtory of eminently learned perſons that have been reduced to great ſtraits and neceſſities.

" Nor yet riches to men of underſtanding:" by which, whether we underſtand men of great parts, or of great diligence and induſtry, it is obvious to every man's obſervation, that an ordinary capacity and underſtanding does uſually lie more level to the buſineſs of a common trade and profeſſion, than more refined and elevated parts; which lie rather for ſpeculation than practice, and are better fitted for the

SERM. XXXVI.

pleaſure and ornament of converſation, than for the toil and drudgery of buſineſs: as a fine razor is admirable for cutting hairs, but the dull hatchet much more proper for hewing a hard and knotty piece of timber. And even when parts and induſtry meet together, they are many times leſs ſucceſsful in the raiſing of a great eſtate, than men of much lower and ſlower underſtandings: becauſe theſe are apt to admire riches, which is a great ſpur to induſtry; and becauſe they are perpetually intent upon one thing, and mind but one buſineſs, from which their thoughts never ſtraggle into vain and uſeleſs enquiries after knowledge, or news, or publick affairs; all which being foreign to their buſineſs they leave to thoſe who are, as they are wont to ſay of them in ſcorn, more curious, and too wiſe to be rich.

"Nor yet favour to men of ſkill." All hiſtory is full of inſtances of the caſual advancement of men to great favour and honour, when others, who have made it their ſerious ſtudy and buſineſs, have fallen ſhort of it. I could give a famous example in this kind, of the manifold and manifeſt diſappointment of a whole order of men: the ſlyeſt and moſt ſubtle, "in their generation, of all the children of this "world;" the moſt politically inſtituted, and the beſt ſtudied and ſkilled in the tempers and intereſts of men; the moſt pragmatical, and cunning, to inſinuate themſelves into the intrigues of courts and great families: and who, by long experience, and an univerſal intelligence, and communicated obſervations, have reduced human affairs, at leaſt as they think, to a certain art or method, and to the moſt ſteady rules that ſuch contingent things are capable of: I believe

lieve you all gueſs before-hand whom I mean, even the honeſt Jeſuits: and yet theſe men, of ſo much art and ſkill, have met with as many checks and diſappointments, as any ſort of men ever did: they have been diſcountenanced by almoſt all princes and ſtates, and, one time or other, baniſhed out of moſt of the courts and countries of Europe. And it is no ſmall argument of the divine providence, that ſo much cunning hath met with ſo little countenance and ſucceſs; and hath been ſo often, ſo groſly infatuated, and their "counſels turned into fooliſhneſs." SERM. XXXVI.

But I promiſed only to mention theſe, and to inſiſt upon the ſecond inſtance in the text, "I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that the battle is not "to the ſtrong," to the gibborim, the giants, for ſo the Hebrew word ſignifies; in which Solomon might poſſibly have reſpect to the hiſtory of the Iſraelites ſubduing the Canaanites, a people of great ſtrength and ſtature, among whom were the giants, the ſons of Anak: or more probably, to the famous encounter of his father David with the great Goliah: but however that be, the ſcripture is full of examples to this purpoſe; that when the providence of GOD is pleaſed to interpoſe in favour of any ſide, it becomes victorious; according to the ſaying of king Aſa in his prayer to GOD "it is nothing with thee to help, "whether with many, or with thoſe that have no "power." 2 Chron. xiv. 11.

Sometimes GOD hath defeated great armies by plain and apparent miracles: ſuch was the drowning of Pharaoh and his hoſt in the Red-ſea; and the ſtars fighting in their courſes againſt Siſera; by which poetical expreſſion I ſuppoſe is meant Siſera's being remarkably

SERM. XXXVI.

markably defeated by a viſible hand from heaven: and ſuch was the deſtruction of the proud king of Aſſyria's army by an angel, who ſlew an hundred and fourſcore and five thouſand of them in one night.

Sometimes GOD does this by more human ways; by ſtriking mighty armies with a panick and unaccountable fear; and ſometimes by putting extraordinary ſpirits and courage into the weaker ſide, ſo that "an hundred ſhall chaſe a thouſand, and a thouſand "ſhall put ten thouſand to flight."

This made DAVID ſo frequently to acknowledge the providence of GOD, eſpecially in the affairs of war. "There is no king ſaved by the multitude of "an hoſt, neither is a mighty man delivered by much "ſtrength." And again, "I will not truſt in my "bow, neither ſhall my ſword ſave me." And SOLOMON confirms the ſame obſervation, "There is no "wiſdom, ſays he, nor underſtanding, nor coun- "ſel againſt the LORD. The horſe is prepared a- "gainſt the day of battle, but ſafety," or, as ſome tranſlations render it, "victory is of the LORD." GIDEON, by a very odd ſtratagem of lamps and pitchers, defeated a very numerous army, only with three hundred men. JONATHAN and his armour-bearer, by climbing up a rock, and coming ſuddenly on the back of the Philiſtines camp, ſtruck them with ſuch a terror as put their whole army to flight. King ASA, with a much inferior number, defeated that huge Ethiopian army which conſiſted of a million. And how was XERXES his mighty army overthrown, almoſt by a handful of Grecians? And, to come nearer our ſelves, how was that formidable fleet of the Spaniards,

Pſ. xxxiii. 16.

Pſal. xliv. 6.

Prov. xxi. 30, 31.

Spaniards, which they preſumptuouſly called invinci- SERM. XXXVI.
ble, ſhattered and broken in pieces, chiefly by the winds and the ſea? So many accidents are there, eſpecially in war, whereby the divine providence doth ſometimes interpoſe and give victory to the weaker ſide.

And this hath been ſo apparent in all ages, that even the heathen did always acknowledge, in the affairs of war, a ſpecial interpoſition of fortune; by which the wiſer among them did underſtand the divine providence. Plutarch, ſpeaking of the Romans, ſays, that "time and fortune," the very ſame with Solomon's time and chance here in the text, "did lay "the foundation of their greatneſs," by which he aſcribes their ſucceſs to a remarkable providence of God concurring with ſeveral happy opportunities.

And Livy, their great hiſtorian, hath this remarkable obſervation, that "in all human affairs, eſpe- "cially in matters of war, fortune hath a mighty "ſtroke." And again, "no where," ſays he, "is the "event leſs anſwerable to expectation than in war; "and therefore nothing is ſo ſlight and inconſidera- "ble, which may not turn the ſcales in a great mat- "ter." And Cæſar himſelf, who was perhaps the moſt ſkilful and proſperous warrior that ever was, makes the ſame acknowledgment; "as in all other "things," ſays he, "ſo particularly in war, fortune "hath a huge ſway." And Plutarch obſerves, that there was no temple at Rome dedicated to wiſdom or valor, but a moſt magnificent and ſtately one to fortune; ſignifying thereby, that they did aſcribe their ſucceſs infinitely more to the providence of God, than to their own courage and conduct. I proceed now, in the Second

SERM. XXXVI.

Second place, to give ſome reaſon and account of this, why the providence of GOD doth ſometimes thus interpoſe to hinder and defeat the moſt probable deſigns of men. To bring men to an acknowledgment of his providence, and of their dependance upon him, and ſubordination to him; and that he is the great governor of the world, and "rules in the "kingdoms of men;" and that "all the inhabitants "of the earth are as nothing to him," and the power of ſecond cauſes inconſiderable: that "he doth ac-"cording to his will, in the armies of heaven, and "among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may "ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him what doſt thou."

God hath ſo ordered things, in the adminiſtration of the affairs of the world, as to encourage the uſe of means; and yet ſo, as to keep men in a continual dependance upon him for the efficacy and ſucceſs of them: to encourage induſtry and prudence, GOD generally permits things to their natural courſe, and to fall out according to the power and probability of ſecond cauſes.

But then, leſt men ſhould caſt off religion, and "deny that GOD is above;" leſt they ſhould "truſt "in their ſword and their bow, and ſay, the LORD "hath not done this;" leſt men ſhould look upon themſelves as the creators and framers of their own fortune, and when they do but a little outſtrip others in wiſdom or power, in the ſkill and conduct of human affairs, they ſhould grow proud and preſumptuous, GOD is pleaſed ſometimes more remarkably to interpoſe, to hide pride from man, as the expreſſion is in Job; to check the haughtineſs and inſolence of men's ſpirits, and to keep them within the bounds

of

of modesty and humility; to make us to know, "that "we are but men," and that the reins of the world are not in our hands, but that there is one above who sways and governs all things here below. SERM. XXXVI.

And indeed if we should suppose, in the first frame of things, which we call nature, an immutable order to be fixed, and all things to go on in a constant course, according to the power and force of second causes, without any interposition of providence to stop, or alter that course, upon any occasion: In this case, the foundation of a great part of religion, but especially of prayer to GOD, would be quite taken away: upon this supposition, it would be the vainest thing in the world to pray to GOD for the good success of our undertakings, or to acknowledge him as the author of it: for if GOD do only look on, and permit all things to proceed in a settled and established course; then instead of praying to GOD, we ought to ply the means, and to make the best provision and preparation we can for the effecting of what we desire; and to rely upon that, without taking GOD at all into our counsel and consideration. For all application to GOD by prayer doth evidently suppose, that the providence of GOD does frequently interpose, to over-rule events besides and beyond the natural and ordinary course of things, and to steer them to a quite different point, from that to which in human probability they seemed to tend.

So that it is every whit as necessary to religion to believe the providence of GOD, and that he governs the world, and does when he pleases interpose in the affairs of it, as that he made it at first. I come now in the

SERM. XXXVI.

Third and laſt place, to make ſome inferences ſuitable to the occaſion of this day, from what hath been ſaid upon this argument: and they ſhall be theſe.

Firſt, from hence we may learn, not to account religion, and time ſpent in the ſervice of GOD, and in prayer to him for his bleſſing upon our endeavours, to be any hindrance to our affairs. For after we have done all we can, the event is ſtill in GOD's hand, and reſts upon the diſpoſal of his providence.

And did men firmly believe this, they would not neglect the duty of prayer, and behave themſelves ſo careleſly, and unconcernedly, and irreverently in it, as we ſee too many do; they would not look upon every hour that is ſpent in devotion as loſt from their buſineſs.

If men would but take a view of what hath happened to them in the courſe of a long life, I believe moſt of us would ſee reaſon to acknowledge, that our proſperity and ſucceſs in any kind hath depended more upon happy opportunities, upon undeſigned and unexpected occurrences, than upon our own prudent forecaſt and conduct.

And if this were well conſidered by us, we ſhould not methinks be ſo apt to leave GOD out of our counſels and undertakings, as if he were a mere name and cypher in the world. It is, I am ſure, the advice of one that was much wiſer and more experienced, than any of us will pretend to be, I mean Solomon,

Prov. iii. 5, 6.

"truſt in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean "not to thine own underſtanding: in all thy ways "acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy paths: "be not wiſe in thine own eyes, fear the LORD and "depart from evil." There is no principle that ought

ought more firmly to be believed by us than this, that to live under a constant sense and awe of almighty God, to depend upon his providence, and to seek his favour and blessing upon all our designs, being fearful to offend him and careful to please him, is a much nearer and surer way to success, than our own best prudence and preparations. SERM. XXXVI.

And therefore at such a time, more especially, when we are going to war, or engaged in it, we should break off our sins by repentance and the sincere resolution of a better course: we should earnestly implore the blessing of God upon our undertakings; and not only take great care that our cause be just, but likewise that there be no wicked thing amongst us, to drive God out of our camp; no accursed thing, that may provoke him to deliver us into the hands of our enemies. It was a particular law given by God to the Jews, "when the host goeth "forth against thine enemy, then keep thy self from "every wicked thing;" then, that is, more especially at such a time. Deut. xxiii. 9.

And this is a necessary caution, not only to those who are personally engaged in the war, that by the favour of God they may have their heads covered in the day of battle, or if God shall suffer them to fall by the hand of the enemy, that having made their peace beforehand with him, they may not only have the comfort of a good cause, but of a good conscience, void of offence towards God and men.

But this caution likewise concerns those, who are interested in the success and event of the war; as we all are, not only in regard of our lives and estates, but of that which ought to be much dearer to us,

SERM. XXXVI.

our religion and the freedom of our conſciences; which are now every whit as much at ſtake, as our civil intereſts and liberties. And therefore as we tender any, or all of theſe, we ſhould be very careful "to keep our ſelves from every wicked thing;" that they who fight for us, may not for our ſins, and for our ſakes, turn their backs in the day of battle, and fall by the ſword of the enemy.

Secondly, from hence we may likewiſe learn, ſo to uſe the means as ſtill to depend upon GOD; who can, as he pleaſes, bleſs the counſels and endeavours of men, or blaſt them and make them of none effect. For as GOD hath promiſed nothing but to a wiſe and diligent uſe of means, ſo all our prudence, and induſtry, and moſt careful preparations may miſcarry, if he do not favour our deſign: for without him nothing is wiſe, nothing is ſtrong, nothing is able to reach and attain it's end.

We ſhould indeed uſe the means as vigorouſly, as if GOD did nothing; and when we have done ſo, we ſhould depend upon GOD for the ſucceſs of thoſe means, as if we our ſelves had done nothing, but did expect all from his favour and bleſſing: for when all is done, we are only ſafe under his protection, and ſure of ſucceſs from his bleſſing.

For whatever vain and fooliſh men may ſay in their hearts, there is, there is a GOD, that made the world, and adminiſters the affairs of it with great wiſdom and goodneſs; elſe how came any of us into being, or what do we here? Did we not moſt aſſuredly believe that there is a GOD, that governs the world and ſuper-intends human affairs, the firſt wiſh of a wiſe man would be, to ſteal out of being, if he

he could; and that the ſame chance or neceſſity that brought him into the world, would take the firſt opportunity to carry him out. For to be every moment liable to preſent, and great, and certain evils; and to have no ſecurity againſt the continuance of them, or the return of the ſame or worſe evils; nor to have any aſſurance of a better and more durable ſtate of reſt and happineſs hereafter, is in truth ſo very melancholy a meditation, that I do not know any conſideration in the world that is of force and power enough to ſupport the mind of man under it: and were there not in the world a being, that is wiſer, and better, and more powerful than our ſelves, and that keeps things from running into endleſs confuſion and diſorder; a being that loves us, and takes care of us, and that will certainly conſider and reward all the good that we do, and all the evil that we ſuffer upon his account, I do not ſee what reaſon any man could have to take any comfort and joy in being, or to wiſh the continuance of it for one moment. SERM. XXXVI.

Thirdly and laſtly, the conſideration of what hath been ſaid upon this argument, ſhould keep us from being too ſanguine and confident of the moſt likely deſigns and undertakings; becauſe theſe do not always anſwer the probability of ſecond cauſes and means; and never leſs, than when we do with the greateſt confidence rely upon them; when we promiſe moſt to our ſelves from them, then are they moſt likely to deceive us: they are, as the prophet compares them, like a broken reed, which a man may walk with in his hand, whilſt he lays no great ſtreſs upon it; but if he truſt to it, and lean his whole weight on it, it will not only fail him, but even pierce him through. And

SERM. XXXVI.

And we cannot do a greater prejudice to our affairs, when they are in the moſt hopeful and likely condition to ſucceed and do well, than to ſhut God and his providence out of our counſels and conſideration. When we paſs God by, and take no notice of him, but will rely upon our own wiſdom and ſtrength, we provoke him to leave us in the hands of our own counſel, and to let us ſee what weak and fooliſh creatures we are: and a man is never in greater danger of drowning, than when he claſps his arms cloſeſt about himſelf: beſides, that God loves to reſiſt the ſelf-confident and preſumptuous, and to "ſcatter the proud in the ima- "gination of their hearts."

And as in all our concernments we ought to have a great regard to God, the ſupreme diſpoſer of all things, and earneſtly to ſeek his favour and bleſſing upon all our undertakings, ſo more eſpecially in the affairs of war; in which the providence of God is pleaſed many times in a very peculiar manner to interpoſe and intereſt it ſelf: and there is great reaſon to think he does ſo; becauſe all war is, as it were, an appeal to God, and a reference of thoſe cauſes to the deciſion of his providence, which through the pride, and injuſtice, and perverſe paſſions of men, can receive no other determination.

And here God loves to ſhew himſelf, and in an eminent manner to take part with right and juſtice againſt thoſe mighty oppreſſors of the earth, who like an overflowing flood would bear down all before them: in this caſe, the providence of God is ſometimes pleaſed to give a remarkable check to great power and violence, and to one that vainly gives out himſelf not unequal to the whole world; by very weak

and contemptible means; and, as the apostle elegantly expresseth it, "by the things which are not, to bring "to nought the things that are:" and to say to him, as God once did to the proud king of Assyria: "Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed, and "against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and "lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Ho- "ly One of Israel. Hast thou not heard long ago, "that I have done it; and of ancient times that I "have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, "that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities "into ruinous heaps: therefore their inhabitants "were of small power, they were dismayed and con- "founded, &c." "But I know thy abode, and thy "going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against "me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult "is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my "hook into thy nose, and my bridle into thy lips, "and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou "camest. —— The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall "do this."

Isa. xxxvii. 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32.

But more especially, in vindication of his oppressed truth and religion, and in the great and signal deliverances of his church and people, GOD is wont to take the conduct of affairs into his own hands, and not to proceed by human rules and measures: he then bids second causes to stand by, that "his own arm "may be seen, and his salvation may appear:" he raiseth the spirits of men above their natural pitch, "and giveth power to the faint, and to them that "have no might he increaseth strength," as the prophet expresseth it.

Thus

SERM. XXXVI.

Thus hath the providence of GOD very viſibly appeared in our late deliverance; in ſuch a manner, as I know not whether he ever did for any other nation, except the people of Iſrael, when he delivered them "from the houſe of bondage by ſo mighty a hand "and ſo out-ſtretched an arm:" and yet too many among us, I ſpeak it this day to our ſhame, do not ſeem to have the leaſt ſenſe of this great deliverance, or of the hand of GOD which was ſo viſible in it; but like the children of Iſrael when they were brought out of Egypt, we are all full of murmurings and diſcontent againſt GOD the author, and his ſervant the happy inſtrument under GOD of this our deliverance. What the prophet ſays of that people, may, I fear, be too juſtly applied to us, "let favour be ſhewn to the "wicked, yet will he not learn righteouſneſs; in "the land of uprightneſs he will deal unjuſtly, and "will not behold the majeſty of the LORD: LORD, "when thy hand is lifted up, they will not ſee; but "they ſhall ſee, and be aſhamed:" and I hope I may add that which follows in the next verſe, "LORD, "thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou alſo haſt "wrought all our works for us." What GOD hath already done for our deliverance is, I hope, an earneſt that he will carry it on to a perfect peace and ſettlement; and this, notwithſtanding our high provocations and horrible ingratitude to "the GOD of our "life, and of our ſalvation."

Iſa. xxvi. 10, 11.

And whenever the providence of GOD thinks fit thus to interpoſe in human affairs, "the race is not "to the ſwift, nor the battle to the ſtrong:" for which reaſon there majeſties, in their great piety and wiſdom, and from a juſt ſenſe of the providence of almighty

almighty God, which "rules in the kingdoms of men," have thought fit to set apart this day for solemn repentance and humiliation: that the many and heinous sins, which we in this nation have been, and still are guilty of, and which are of all other our greatest and most dangerous enemies, may not "separate between God and us, and hinder good things from us," and cover us with confusion in the day of our danger and distress: and likewise, earnestly to implore the favour and blessing of almighty God upon their majesties forces and preparations by sea and land: and more particularly, for the preservation of his majesty's sacred person, upon whom so much depends, and who is contented again to hazard himself to save us.

To conclude; there is no such way to engage the providence of God for us, as by real repentance and reformation; and by doing all we can, in our several places, from the highest to the lowest, by the provision of wise and effectual laws for the discountenancing and suppressing of prophaneness and vice, and by the careful and due execution of them, and by the more kindly and powerful influence of a good example, to retrieve the ancient piety and virtue of the nation; for without this, whatever we may think of the firmness of our present settlement, we cannot long be upon good terms with almighty God, upon whose favour depends the prosperity and stability of the present and future times.

I have but one thing more to mind you of; and that is, to stir up your charity towards the poor; which is likewise a great part of the duty of this day, and which ought always to accompany our prayers

SERM. XXXVI.

and faſtings: " thy prayers and thine alms," ſaith the angel to Cornelius, are " come up before GOD:" and therefore if we deſire that our prayers ſhould reach heaven, and receive a gracious anſwer from GOD, we muſt ſend up our alms along with them.

And inſtead of all other arguments to this purpoſe, I ſhall only recite to you the plain and perſuaſive words of GOD himſelf, in which he declares what kind of faſt is acceptable to him: " Is it ſuch a faſt " as I have choſen? a day for a man to afflict his " ſoul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulruſh, to " ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes under him? Wilt thou " call this a faſt, and an acceptable day to the LORD? " Is not this the faſt that I have choſen? To looſe " the bands of wickedneſs, and to undo the heavy " burthens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and " that ye break every yoke: is it not to deal thy " bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the " poor that are caſt out to thine houſe; when thou " ſeeſt the naked that thou cover him, and that thou " hide not thy ſelf from thine own fleſh? Then " ſhall thy light break forth as the morning, and " thy ſalvation ſhall ſpring forth ſpeedily; thy righteouſneſs, or thine alms, ſhall go before thee, and " the glory of the LORD ſhall be thy rereward: then " ſhalt thou call, and I will anſwer thee; thou ſhalt " cry, and he ſhall ſay, here I am."

Iſa. lviii. 5, 6, &c.

Now to " him that ſitteth upon the throne, and " to the Lamb that was ſlain: To GOD, even our " Father, and to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the firſt " begotten from the dead, and the prince of the " kings of the earth: unto him who hath loved us,

" and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood; SERM. XXXVI.
" and hath made us kings and prieſts unto GOD and
" his Father: to him be glory and dominion, for e-
" ver and ever, Amen.

" And the GOD of peace, that brought again
" from the dead our LORD JESUS, that great ſhep-
" herd of the ſheep, through the blood of the ever-
" laſting covenant, make you perfect in every good
" work to do his will, working in you that which
" is well-pleaſing in his ſight; through JESUS
" CHRIST, to whom be glory, for ever and ever,
" Amen.

The way to prevent the ruin of a sinful people.

A

FAST-SERMON

Preached before the

LORD-MAYOR, &c.

ON

Wednesday, June the 18th, 1690.

To the right honourable

Sir THOMAS PILKINGTON,

Lord-Mayor of the City of London:

AND THE

Court of Aldermen.

MY LORD,

IN obedience to your commands, I have publiſhed this ſermon lately preached before you, and do now humbly preſent you with it; heartily wiſhing it may have that good effect for the reformation of our lives, and reconciliation of our unhappy differences, which was ſincerely intended by,

MY LORD,

Your moſt faithful

and humble ſervant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

SER-

SERMON XXXVII.

The way to prevent the ruin of a sinful people.

JEREMIAH vi. 8.

Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

SERM. XXXVII.

THESE words are a merciful warning from GOD to the people of Israel by the prophet Jeremiah, the last prophet that GOD sent to them before their captivity in Babylon.

The time of his prophecy was of a long continuance, above the space of forty years, viz. from the thirteenth year of king Josiah, to the eleventh year of king Zedekiah, the year in which Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

This I observe, to shew the great patience of GOD to a sinful nation. And this is much the same space of time that GOD gave warning by our blessed SAVIOUR and his apostles to the same people of the Jews concerning their final destruction. For it was about forty years after the prediction of our SAVIOUR concerning it, just before his death, that the terrible destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation was executed upon them by the Romans, or rather chiefly by themselves; as I shall presently shew. Of which dreadful desolation, the first taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and their captivity into Babylon

was

SERM. XXXVII.

was a kind of type and forerunner. For, as Joſephus obſerves, the taking of Jeruſalem by Titus Veſpaſian did happen in the very ſame month, and on the very ſame day of the month in which Jeruſalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, viz. upon our tenth of Auguſt.

And it is not unworthy of our obſervation, that the time of God's warning is wont to hold ſome ſort of proportion with the extent of his judgments. Before the univerſal deluge which deſtroyed the whole world, Noah and his family only excepted, God gave a much longer warning by the preaching of Noah, for the ſpace of an hundred and twenty years. Before the deſtruction of a particular nation, if we may judge by God's dealing with the Jews, his time of warning is forty years. And before the deſtruction of a particular city, if we may conclude any thing from the ſingle example of Niniveh, the time of God's warning is yet much ſhorter, the ſpace of forty days.

And now to what end doth God exerciſe ſo much patience and threaten ſo long beforehand, but that by the terror of his threatnings men may be brought to repentance, and by repentance may prevent the execution of them? For all the while that God by his prophet threatens ruin and deſtruction to the people of Iſrael, he earneſtly invites and urges them to repentance, that by this means they might eſcape the ruin that was denounced againſt them: this being a condition perpetually implied in the denunciation of publick judgments, that if a people repent of the evil of their doings, God alſo will repent of the evil which he ſaid he would do unto them, as he expreſly

expreſly declares chap. xviii. verſ. 7, 8. " At what " inſtant I ſpeak concerning a nation and concerning " a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to " deſtroy it; if that nation, againſt whom I have pro- " nounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the " evil which I thought to do unto them." And here in the text, after GOD had threaten'd deſtruction to Jeruſalem, becauſe of the overflowing of all manner of wickedneſs and oppreſſion in the midſt of her, he gives her a merciful warning to prevent this ruin and deſolation by repentance, verſ. 6, 7. " Thus " hath the LORD of hoſts ſaid, hew ye down trees, " and caſt a mount againſt Jeruſalem; this is a city " to be viſited, ſhe is wholly oppreſſion in the midſt " of her. As a fountain caſteth out waters, ſo ſhe " caſteth out her wickedneſs. Before me continual- " ly is grief and wounds." And yet when he had pronounced this fearful ſentence upon her, he tells her that all this miſery and deſolation might yet be prevented, if they would but hearken to the counſel of GOD, and be inſtructed by him concerning the things of their peace: for ſo it follows in the next words, " Be thou inſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my " ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, " a land not inhabited. Be thou inſtructed, O Jeru- " ſalem," that is, do but now at laſt take that counſel and warning, which hath ſo often and ſo long been tendered to thee by my ſervant the prophet, who hath now for the ſpace of forty years continually, and that with great earneſtneſs and importunity, been warning thee of this danger, and calling thee to repentance and a better mind.

" Leſt my ſoul depart from thee." In the He-

SERM. XXXVII.

brew it is, "left my soul be loosened and disjointed "from thee," as it is in the margin of your bibles; hereby signifying, in the most emphatical manner, the wonderful affection and kindness which GOD had for his people, and how strongly his soul was linked to them, and how loth he was to withdraw his love from them; it was like the tearing off of a limb, or the plucking of a joint in sunder; so unwilling is GOD to come to extremity; so hardly is he brought to resolve upon the ruin even of a sinful nation: how much rather would he, that they would be instructed and receive correction, and hearken to the things of their peace? But if they will not be persuaded, if no warning will work upon them, "his spirit will not always strive with them;" but "his soul" will at last, though with great unwillingness and reluctancy, "depart from them."

And then, no intercession will prevail for them; as he threatens by the same prophet, chap. xv. ver. 1. "Then said the LORD unto me, though Moses and "Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not "be towards this people; cast them out of my sight, "and let them go forth;" away with them into captivity, for they have lost my heart, and no intercession of others for them, nothing but their own repentance can recover it.

And when his soul is once departed from a people, and his heart turned against them, then all sorts of evils and calamities will be let loose upon them; as we may read in the next verse of that chapter; "And it shall come to pass if they say unto thee, Jer. xv. 2. "whither shall we go forth? then shalt thou tell them, "thus saith the LORD, such as are for death to "death,

" death, and ſuch as are for the ſword to the ſword, SERM. XXXVII.
" and ſuch as are for the famine to the famine, and
" ſuch as are for the captivity to the captivity." For then GOD will be weary of repenting, as he tells them verſe 6. " Thou haſt forſaken me, ſaith the " LORD, thou art gone backward; therefore will " I ſtretch out my hand againſt thee, and deliver thee; " I am weary of repenting." By our obſtinate impenitency we harden the heart of GOD againſt us, and make " him weary of repenting." And when his ſoul is thus departed from a people, nothing remains but a fearful expectation of ruin. " Wo un- Hoſ. ix.
" to them," ſaith GOD by the prophet, " when I 12.
" depart from them." Therefore " be thou inſtruct-
" ed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my ſoul depart from thee,
" leſt I make thee deſolate, a land not inhabited.

Having given this account of the words, I ſhall obſerve from them three things well worth our conſideration.

Firſt, the infinite goodneſs and patience of GOD towards a ſinful people, and his great unwillingneſs to bring ruin and deſtruction upon them, " leſt my " ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, " a land not inhabited." How loth is he that things ſhould come to this extremity? He is not without great difficulty, and ſome kind of violence, as it were, offered to himſelf, brought to this ſevere reſolution; his ſoul is, as it were, rent and disjointed from them.

Secondly, you ſee here what is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the miſery and ruin of a ſinful people. If they will be inſtructed and

SERM. XXXVII.

take warning by the threatnings of God, and will become wiser and better, then "his soul" will not "depart from them," he will not bring upon them the desolation which he hath threatned.

Thirdly, you have here intimated the miserable case and condition of a people, when God takes off his affection from them, and gives over all further care and concernment for them. Wo unto them, when "his soul departs from them." For when God once leaves them, then all sorts of evils and calamities will break in upon them.

I shall speak as briefly as I can to these three observations from the text.

First, I observe the infinite patience and goodness of God towards a sinful people, and his great unwillingness to bring ruin and destruction upon them; "lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee "desolate, a land not inhabited." How loth is God that things should come to this? He is very patient to particular persons, notwithstanding their great and innumerable provocations. "God is strong "and patient," though men "provoke him every "day." And much greater is his patience to whole nations and great communities of men.

How great was it to the old world, "when the "long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah," for the space of an hundred and twenty years? And did not expire, till "he saw that the wickedness of "man was grown great upon the earth, and that all "flesh had corrupted it's way;" not till it was necessary to drown the world to cleanse it, and to destroy mankind to reform it, by beginning a new world

world upon the only righteous family that was left of all the laſt generation of the old. For ſo GOD teſtifies concerning Noah, when he commanded him to enter into the ark, ſaying, "Come thou and all "thy houſe into the ark; for thee," that is, thee only, "have I ſeen righteous before me in this ge- "neration." SERM. XXXVII. Gen. vii. 1.

The patience of GOD was great likewiſe to Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them. For when "the cry of their ſins had reached heaven," and called loud for vengeance to be poured down upon them, to expreſs the wonderful patience of GOD towards ſuch grievous ſinners, though nothing is hid from his ſight and knowledge, yet he is re- preſented as coming down from heaven to earth on purpoſe to enquire into the truth of things, and "whether they were altogether according to the "cry that was come up to him." And when he found things as bad as was poſſible, yet then was he willing to have come almoſt to the loweſt terms imaginable, that if there had been but "ten righteous "perſons" in thoſe wicked cities, "he would not "have deſtroyed them for the ten's ſake.

Nay, he ſeems to come to lower terms yet, with the city of Jeruſalem, Jer. v. 1. "Run ye to and fro "through the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, and ſee now "and know, and ſeek in the broad places thereof, "if ye can find a man, if there be any that execut- "eth judgment, and ſeeketh the truth, and I will "pardon it."

What can be imagined more ſlow, and mild, and merciful, than the proceedings of the divine juſtice againſt a ſinful people? GOD is repreſented in ſcrip-

ture

SERM. XXXVII.

ture as taking a long time to "make ready his bow," and to "whet his glittering ſword," before "his "hand takes hold of" vengeance; as if the inſtruments of his wrath lay by him blunt and ruſty, and unready for uſe. Many a time he threatens, and many a time lifts up his hand, before he gives the fatal blow. And how glad is he when any good man will ſtep in and interpoſe to ſtay his hand? As we read Pſal. cvi. 23. "Therefore he ſaid," ſpeaking of the people of Iſrael, "that he would deſtroy "them, had not Moſes his ſervant ſtood in the "breach to turn away his wrath, leſt he ſhould de-"ſtroy them." And how kindly doth GOD take it of Phineas, as a moſt acceptable piece of ſervice done to him, and which he hardly knew how ſufficiently to reward, that he was a means of putting a ſtop to his anger againſt the people of Iſrael: inſomuch that the Pſalmiſt tells us, that "it was account-"ed to him for righteouſneſs to all generations for "evermore." I will recite the whole paſſage at large, becauſe it is remarkable. When the people of Iſrael were ſeduced into idolatry and whoredom by the daughters of Moab, Phinehas in great zeal ſtood up and executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi in the very act: by which means the plague which was broken out upon the congregation of Iſrael was preſently ſtayed. Hear what GOD ſays to Moſes concerning this act of Phinehas. "The "LORD ſpake unto Moſes, ſaying, Phinehas the ſon "of Eleazar, the ſon of Aaron the prieſt, hath turn-"ed away my wrath from the children of Iſrael, "whilſt he was zealous for my ſake, that I conſum-"ed them not. Wherefore ſay, behold I give un-

to

" to him my covenant of peace, and he ſhall have " it, and his ſeed after him, even the covenant of " an everlaſting prieſthood, becauſe he was zealous " for his GOD, and made an atonement for the " children of Iſrael." That which GOD takes ſo kindly at his hands, next to his zeal for him, is, that he pacified GOD's wrath towards the children of Iſrael.

And thus did GOD from time to time deal with the people of Iſrael, that great example of the old teſtament of the merciful methods of the divine providence towards a ſinful nation. And an example, as St. Paul tells us, purpoſely " recorded for our ad- " monition, upon whom the ends of the world are " come." 1 Cor. x. 11.

Let us therefore conſider a little the aſtoniſhing patience of GOD towards that perverſe people. After all the ſigns and wonders which he had wrought in their deliverance out of Egypt, and for their ſupport in the wilderneſs; and notwithſtanding their groſs and ſtupid infidelity, and horrible ingratitude to GOD their ſaviour, and all their rebellious murmurings and diſcontents, yet he ſuffered their manners for the ſpace of forty years.

And when they were at laſt peaceably ſettled in the promiſed land; notwithſtanding their frequent relapſes into idolatry, with what patience did GOD expect their repentance, and the reſult of all the merciful meſſages and warnings given them from time to time by his prophets, as one that earneſtly deſired it, and even longed for it? " O Jeruſalem, " waſh thine heart from wickedneſs, that thou may- " eſt be ſaved; how long ſhall vain thoughts lodge " within thee?" that is, how long wilt thou delude Jer. iv. 14.

SERM. XXXVII.

thy self with vain hopes of escaping the judgments of GOD by any other way than by repentance? And again, " O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? " when shall it once be?" And chap. viii. ver. 6. says GOD there, " I hearkened and I heard, but they " spake not aright; no man repented him of his " wickedness, saying, what have I done?" Where GOD is represented, after the manner of men, waiting with great patience, as one that would have been glad to have heard any penitent word drop from them, to have seen any sign of their repentance and return to a better mind.

Jer. xiii. 27.

And when they made some shews of repentance, and had some fits of good resolution that did presently vanish and come to nothing, how passionately does GOD complain of their fickleness and inconstancy? " O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O " Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your good- " ness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it " goeth away."

And at last, when nothing would do, with what difficulty and reluctance does GOD deliver them up into the hands of their enemies? " How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Judah? " How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I " set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within " me, and my repentings are kindled together; I " will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I " will not destroy Ephraim." What a conflict is here? What tenderness and yearning of his bowels towards them? He cannot find in his heart to give them up, till he is forced to it by the last necessity.

Hosea xi. 8, 9.

And

And when the nation of the Jews, after their return from the captivity of Babylon, had in the courſe of ſeveral ages greatly corrupted themſelves, and filled up the meaſure of their ſins by "crucifying the "LORD of life and glory," yet how ſlow was the patience of GOD in bringing that fatal and final deſtruction upon them? not till after the moſt merciful warnings given to them, by the apoſtles of our LORD and SAVIOUR; not till after the moſt obſtinate impenitency of forty years, under the moſt powerful means of repentance that any people in the world ever enjoyed. I proceed to the

Second obſervation from the text, namely, what is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the ruin of a ſinful people? and that is, if they will be inſtructed, and take warning by the threatnings of GOD to become wiſer and better, then "his ſoul will "not depart from them," and he will not bring upon them the deſolation threatned. "Be thou in- "ſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my ſoul depart from "thee, and I make thee deſolate, a land not in- "habited;" intimating, or rather plainly declaring to us, that if we will receive inſtruction and take warning, the evil threatned ſhall not come. For what other reaſon can there be, why GOD ſhould threaten ſo long before he ſtrikes, and ſo earneſtly preſs men to repentance, but that he might have the opportunity to ſpare them, and to ſhew mercy to them? II

And indeed, as I obſerved before, all the denunciations and threatnings of GOD to a ſinful nation do carry this tacit condition in them, that if that nation turn from their evil ways, GOD will repent

SERM. XXXVII.

pent of the evil which he thought to do unto them. For God never paſſeth ſo irrevocable a ſentence upon a nation, as to exclude the caſe of repentance: nay on the contrary, he gives all imaginable encouragement to it, and is always ready to meet it, with a pardon in his hand. "How often would I have "gathered thee," ſays our merciful Lord when he wept over Jeruſalem, "as a hen gathereth her chick-"ens under her wings, and ye would not; there-"fore your houſe is left unto you deſolate."

God is very merciful to particular perſons upon their repentance. When the prodigal ſon in the parable, after all his riot and lewdneſs came to himſelf and reſolved to return home, "his father ſeeing "him yet afar off" coming towards him, "came "out to meet him, and had compaſſion on him and "kiſſed him." And can any of us be ſo obſtinate and hard-hearted, as not preſently to reſolve to repent and return, and to meet the compaſſions of ſuch a father? who, after we have offended him to the uttermoſt, is upon the firſt diſcovery of our repentance ready to be as kind to us, as he could poſſibly have been if we had never offended him.

And much more is God ready to receive a nation upon their ſincere repentance; when his judgments muſt needs make great havock, and ſo many are like to ſuffer under them. This conſideration God urgeth and pleads with his froward prophet, in behalf of the great city of Niniveh. "And ſhall not I "ſpare that great city of Niniveh, wherein are more "than ſixſcore thouſand perſons, who cannot diſ-"cern their right hand from their left?" that is, ſo many innocent children, by which we may judge

Jonah iv. 11.

of

of the vaſt number of the reſt of the inhabitants. For this is a great conſideration with GOD, in his ſending of publick calamities, the multitude of the ſufferers; and that not only the guilty but the innocent alſo, without a ſpecial and miraculous providence, muſt be involved in a common calamity. SERM. XXXVII.

Sometimes GOD reſpites his judgments upon the mere external humiliation of a people, and ſome formal teſtimonies and expreſſions of their repentance. When the people of "Iſrael ſought GOD and enqui- "red early after him, though they did but flatter "him with their mouth, and their heart was not "right with him," yet the pſalmiſt tells us, "that "being full of compaſſion he forgave their iniquity "and deſtroyed them not;" that is, he forgave them ſo far as to reſpite their ruin. Pſal. lxxviii.

And much more will a ſincere and effectual repentance ſtay GOD's hand, and infallibly turn him from the fierceneſs of his anger: inſomuch that after he had fixed and determined the very day for the deſtruction of Niniveth, and had engaged the credit of his prophet in it, yet as ſoon as "he ſaw their works, "and that they turned from their evil ways," and how glad was he to ſee it? he preſently "repented of "the evil which he had ſaid he would do unto them, "and he did it not." In this caſe GOD does not ſtand upon the reputation of his prophet, by whom he had ſent ſo peremptory a meſſage to them; but his mercy breaks through all conſiderations, and rejoiceth againſt judgment: for he cannot find in his heart to ruin thoſe who by the terror of his judgments will be brought to repentance.

SERM. XXXVII.

And this surely is a mighty motive and encouragement to repentance, to be assured that we shall find mercy; and that when our ruin is even decreed, and all the instruments of GOD's wrath are fixed and ready for execution, and his hand is just taking hold of vengeance, yet even then a sincere repentance will mitigate his hotteſt displeasure, and turn away his wrath. And if we will not come in upon these terms, we extort the judgments of GOD from him, and force him to depart from us, and with violent hands we pull down vengeance upon our own heads.

III Thirdly and lastly, the text intimates to us the miserable case and condition of a people when GOD takes off his heart and affection from them, when he gives over all further care and concernment for them, and abandons them to their own wickedness and folly, and to the miserable effects and consequences thereof: "Wo unto them, when his soul departs "from them:" for then all sorts of evils and calamities will rush in, and "wrath will come upon "them to the uttermost;" as was threatned to the Jews a little before their final destruction, and executed upon them in the most terrible and amazing manner that ever was from the foundation of the World. "These," as our blessed SAVIOUR expresses it, were "days of vengeance" indeed, that "all "things which were written," that is, foretold by Moses and the prophets concerning the fearful end of this perverse and stiff-necked people, "might be "fulfilled."

And because my text speaks to Jerusalem, "be "thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart "from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not in-

SERM. XXXVII.

" habited;" though this was ſpoken to Jeruſalem before her captivity into Babylon, yet becauſe this firſt captivity was but a faint type of her laſt and final deſolation by the Romans, when GOD's ſoul was indeed " departed from her," and Judea was " left " deſolate, a land not inhabited:" I ſhall therefore briefly repreſent to you the full effect of this threatning in her laſt final deſtruction, when GOD's ſoul was, as it were, perfectly looſened and disjointed from her: that you may ſee what the fierceneſs and power of GOD's anger is, when " he departs from " them, and wrath comes upon them to the utter- " moſt," becauſe they would not be " inſtructed " and know the time of their viſitation."

Thus it was with the Jews, about forty years after the paſſion of our LORD, whom " with wicked " hands they had crucified and ſlain:" then was " GOD's ſoul departed from them:" then darkneſs and deſolation came upon them; and they were in a far worſe condition than a country would be that is forſaken of the ſun, and left condemned to a perpetual night, in which darkneſs and diſorder, faction and fury do reign and rage; together with all the fatal conſequences of zeal and ſtrife, which, St. James tells us, are " confuſion and every evil work." For when GOD is once gone, all the good and happineſs of mankind departs together with him: then men fall foul upon one another, divide into parties and factions, and execute the vengeance of GOD upon themſelves with their own hands.

Thus it happened to the Jewiſh nation, when the meaſure of their iniquity was full, and their final ruin was approaching. And that we might know

their

SERM. XXXVII.

their fate, and be instructed by it, GOD provided and preserved a faithful historian on purpose, who was an eye-witness of all that befel them; I mean Josephus, who was personally engaged, and was a considerable commander in the wars of the Jews with the Romans, before the siege of Jerusalem: and during the siege was present in the Roman camp, and being a Jew himself hath transmitted these things to posterity in a most exact and admirable history: such a history, as no man that hath the heart and bowels of a man can read without the greatest pity and astonishment.

In the preface of that lamentable history he tells us, "that all the misfortunes and calamities which "the world from the beginning of it had seen, com- "pared with this last calamity of the Jewish nation, "were but slight and inconsiderable." He tells us likewise, that their civil dissentions were the next and immediate cause of their confusion and ruin.

And this more than once: for when Pompey, about sixty years before our SAVIOUR's birth, sat down before Jerusalem, he tells us, * that the factions and divisions which they had among themselves were the cause of the taking the city and temple at that time. And when they rebelled afterwards, that the heads of their factions provoked the Romans, and brought them unwillingly upon them, and at last forced the best natured prince in the world, Titus Vespasian, to that severity which he most earnestly desired by all means to have prevented. And he farther tells us, that even before the siege of Jerusalem, the cities of Judea had all of them civil discords among themselves, and that in every city one part of the Jews fought against another. And

* Lib. i. c. 3.

Lib. iv. c. 5.

SERM. XXXVII.

And when Jeruſalem began to be beſieged, what a miſerable condition was it in, by the cruelty of the zealots under the command of John the ſon of Giorah? And preſently after another faction aroſe under Simon, who entered into the city with a freſh force, and aſſaulted the zealots in the temple; ſo that moſt miſerable havock was made between them. And then a third faction ſtarted up under Eleazar, as bad as either of the other: ſo that infinite almoſt were the numbers of the people within the city, that were barbarouſly ſlain by theſe ſeditions. Lib. vii. c. 1.

And what an infatuation was this? when the enemy was at the gates and ready to break in upon them, to employ their whole ſtrength and force againſt one another: when the ſame courage and fury, which they ſpent ſo freely upon themſelves, had it been turned with the like deſperateneſs and obſtinacy upon the Romans, might have endangered the whole force of the Roman empire. Once or twice indeed they ſeemed to lay aſide their enmity for a little while, and to unite in the common defence; but as ſoon as the danger of a preſent aſſault was over, they relapſed into their former ſtate of inteſtine enmity and diſſention, as if that had been their main buſineſs, and the preſervation of their city againſt the Romans only a work by the by, and not much to be regarded.

And to add to all their other miſeries, they were ſo blinded by their own rage and madneſs, that they wilfully brought upon themſelves an extreme famine. For, as the hiſtorian tells us, they themſelves ſet on fire vaſt ſtores of corn and other neceſſaries, ſufficient to have ſerved them for many years; and by this means

SERM. XXXVII.

means the city was much sooner reduced, even by a famine of their own making, and which could not have been brought upon them but by themselves.

This famine, besides all the other miseries and cruelties which it occasioned within the city, did force great numbers of them to steal out by night into the Roman camp; where they met with as cruel but a speedier death. For Titus, in hope to reduce them the sooner by terror, ordered all those that came out of the city to be crucified before the walls. Which order was so severely executed, that for several days five hundred a day were crucified, till there was neither room left to place crosses in, nor wood whereof to make them: so that they who once cried out so vehemently against our SAVIOUR, "crucify "him, crucify him," had enough of it at last, and by the just and most remarkable judgments of GOD were paid home in their own kind.

Behold the sad fate of a sinful people, when GOD is departed from them! Then all evils overtake them at once. For as their misery increased, so did their impiety to that degree, that the historian tells us, Lib. v. c. 2. "they scorned and mocked at all divine and holy "things, and derided the oracles of the prophets, e- "steeming them no better than fables;" and, in a word, were carried to that extremity of wickedness, as not only to prophane their temple in the highest manner, and to break the laws of their own religion, but even to violate the laws of nature and humanity in the grossest instances: which made their historian Lib. vi. c. 11. to give that dismal character of them, "that as he "thought no city ever suffered such things, so no "nation, from the beginning of the world, did e- "ver

" ever ſo abound in all manner of wickedneſs and " impiety :" a certain ſign that GOD's ſoul was departed from them. SERM. XXXVII.

And the ſame hiſtorian afterwards, upon conſideration of the lamentable ſtate into which their ſeditions had brought them, breaks out into this doleful lamentation over them, " O miſerable city! " what didſt thou ſuffer from the Romans, though " at laſt they ſet thee on fire to purge thee from " thy ſins, that is to be compared with thoſe mi- " ſeries which thou haſt brought upon thy ſelf? Lib. vii. c. 1.

To ſuch a diſmal ſtate did things come at laſt, that, as the ſame hiſtorian relates, " many of the " Jews prayed for the good ſucceſs of their enemies, " to deliver them from their civil diſſentions, the " calamity whereof was ſo great, that their final de- " ſtruction by the Romans did rather put an end to " their miſery than increaſe it,

——— *En! quo diſcordia cives*
Perduxit miſeros ———

To conclude this ſad ſtory. It was the Jews themſelves that by their own folly and diſſentions forced the Romans to this ſorrowful victory over them; for in truth all the remorſe and pity was on the enemies ſide. The Romans were little more than ſpectators in this cruel tragedy, the Jews acted it upon themſelves: and they only, who were arrived at that prodigious height of impiety and wickedneſs, were fit to be the executioners of this vengeance of GOD upon one another: as if the prophet had foretold this, when he ſays, " thine own wickedneſs " ſhall correct thee." Jer. ii. 19.

2.

SERM. XXXVII.

When impiety and wickedneſs are at their higheſt pitch in a nation, then they themſelves are the only proper inſtruments to puniſh one another. The Romans were by far too good and gentle to inflict a ſuffering upon the Jews, that was equal to the evil of their doings: none but their own barbarous ſelves, who were ſunk down into the very loweſt degeneracy of human nature, were capable of ſo much cruelty and inhumanity as was requiſite to execute the judgment of GOD upon them to that degree which their ſins had deſerved.

You ſee, my brethren, by what hath been ſaid upon this argument, what were the faults, and what the fate of the Jewiſh nation. Now theſe things, as the apoſtle expreſly tells us, "were written for our "admonition," and to the intent that "we upon "whom the ends of the world are come" might be inſtructed by them: we, I ſay, who next to the Jewiſh nation ſeem to be a people highly favoured by GOD above all the nations of the earth. We reſemble them very much in their many and wonderful deliverances, and a great deal too much in their faults and follies.

But as I intend it not, ſo GOD forbid that there ſhould be any juſt ground for a full and exact parallel between us; yet this I muſt ſay, that nothing ever came nearer to them than we do in ſeveral reſpects. In our fickleneſs and inconſtancy, in our murmurings and diſcontents; for we are never pleaſed with what GOD does, neither when he brings us into danger, nor when he delivers us out of it: we reſemble them likewiſe, in our horrible profaneneſs and infidelity, and in our impiety and wickedneſs

of ſeveral kinds: in our monſtrous ingratitude and moſt unworthy returns to the GOD of our ſalvation: and laſtly, in our factions and diviſions, which were the fatal ſign of GOD's being departed from the Jews, and the immediate cauſe and means of thoſe diſmal calamities which wrought their final ruin. And how can we chuſe but dread leſt their fate ſhould overtake us, the example of whoſe faults and follies we do in ſo many things ſo nearly reſemble?

That this may not, nor any thing like it, be our fate, let us apply our ſelves to the great duties of this day; a ſerious and deep repentance, and humiliation of our ſelves before almighty GOD for the many and heinous ſins which we in this nation have been, and ſtill are guilty of, againſt his divine majeſty; by our profaneneſs and impiety, by our lewdneſs and luxury, by our oppreſſion and injuſtice, by our implacable malice and hatred one towards another, and by our ſenſeleſs diviſions and animoſities one againſt another, without cauſe and without end: by our neglect of GOD's worſhip, and profanation of his holy day, and by our dreadful abuſe of GOD's great and glorious name in thoſe horrid oaths and curſes and imprecations which are heard almoſt day and night in the ſtreets of this great city.

For theſe and all other our innumerable provocations of the patience and goodneſs and long-ſuffering of GOD towards us, let us ſadly repent our ſelves this day, and "turn unto the LORD with all our "hearts, with faſting, and with weeping, and with "mourning: and rent our hearts and not our gar-"ments, and turn unto the LORD our GOD; for he "is gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger and of

SERM. XXXVII.

" great kindneſs, and repenteth him of the evil:
" and who knoweth if he will return and repent and
" leave a bleſſing behind him? Turn thou us unto
" thee, O LORD, and we ſhall be turned: take
" away all iniquity, and receive us graciouſly."

And let us earneſtly beg of him, that he would be pleaſed to prevent thoſe terrible judgments and calamities which hang over us, and which our ſins have ſo juſtly deſerved ſhould fall upon us: and that he would perfect that wonderful deliverance which he hath begun for us, and " eſtabliſh the thing " which he hath wrought:" that he would bleſs them whom he hath ſet in authority over us; and particularly, that he would preſerve the perſon of the king in his preſent expedition, and crown him with victory and good ſucceſs.

And to our repentance and prayers let us add our liberal alms, and according to the counſel given by the prophet to Nebuchadnezzar, let us " break off " our ſins by righteouſneſs, and our iniquities by " ſhewing mercy to the poor, if ſo be it may be a " lengthening of our tranquillity."

We are yet, bleſſed be GOD, in the full enjoyment of peace and quiet at home, and of our religion and civil liberties. GOD hath given us two excellent princes ſitting on the throne together, and both of the ſame religion with the main body of the nation; and as bright examples of piety and goodneſs as England ever ſaw: and who do by all ways and means ſtudy and ſeek the good of the people committed to their charge.

So that if we did but know our own happineſs, and how to value it, we might be the happieſt peo-

ple

ple this day under heaven: and yet for all this, we are very far from being happy; becauſe we are neither contented, nor united; and though we have all the materials of happineſs about us within our reach, yet have we not the ſkill and wiſdom to put them together.

Miſerable people! that may be happy and will not; whom neither ſo freſh a deliverance from ſo great a danger as was juſt ready to have ſwallowed us up, nor the fear and apprehenſion of falling again into the like confuſion, can be a warning to us from returning again unto the ſame folly: for thoſe odious and unhappy names of difference which ſome years ago ſprang up among us, the devil knows how, did ſeem whilſt a common danger threatned us, to be quite dead and buried: but no ſooner was the danger over, but by a kind of miraculous infatuation, behold a ſudden reſurrection of them, with greater heats and animoſities, if poſſible, than before: juſt as it was with the Jews in the ſiege of Jeruſalem, when the Romans had made a wide breach, and the city was furiouſly aſſaulted, the factions then gave truce to one another, and ran in to the common defence; but as ſoon as ever the danger was a little over, they fell on afreſh and proſecuted their main deſign of deſtroying one another.

And now that the danger is a little over with us alſo, how like a fate upon us does it look, that we are ſo ſoon altered from our wiſer and better temper? Did we well and wiſely before our late happy revolution, when we united for our common defence againſt a common danger, and did let thoſe unlucky names of diſtinction fall, ſo that they ſeemed to be

quite

SERM. XXXVII.

quite extinguiſhed? And can it be now wiſe to revive them, and to take them up again; when the ſame danger in ſome degree, and from the ſame implacable enemies, ſtill hovers over us? No ſurely, it would not be wiſe, if the danger were quite paſt and over; but when it ſtill remains and threatens us, what greater folly and infatuation can there be than ſtill to divide and quarrel among our ſelves? Will nothing but ſad and bitter experience be an admonition to us? Will nothing but the laſt neceſſity and extremity of things bring us to our ſelves and teach us wiſdom?

Methinks we ſhould all now be glad to be at reſt, after the tedious troubles and diſtractions, the fruitleſs quarrels and diviſions of fifty years. So long I remember; and in all that ſpace how very few years paſſed over us without ſome great calamity and diſmal event. So that by this time one would think we ſhould all be ſick of our own follies, and ſo tired with our unprofitable feuds and diſſentions, as to make both ſides look about them, to ſee if any body will take pity on us, and ſtep in to part our quarrels.

And now I begin to be ſenſible, that I have engaged in a tender point indeed; and do feel my ſelf ſtanding upon a very ſlippery place. For who is fit to interpoſe in ſuch hot and fierce differences? who can do it without danger, and with any hopes of ſucceſs? And yet for Zion's ſake "I will not hold my "peace," for Jeruſalem's ſake "I will not keep ſi-"lence:" Of ſo great conſequence is it to the peace and happineſs of this church and nation, that theſe names and diſtinctions of parties ſhould be laid down and aboliſhed for ever.

In

SERM. XXXVII.

In order whereunto I take it for granted, and lay it for a principle, that he who hopes to perſuade both ſides muſt provoke neither: and therefore I will not ſo much as enquire where the fault lies. It is in theſe civil differences as in family quarrels between man and wife, if any man aſk on which ſide lies the fault; one may almoſt ſafely anſwer at a venture, on both ſides. It muſt indeed begin on one, but if it be not preſently healed and made up, the other party is always ſo civil as to run in and take a ſhare of the fault, that all the blame may not lie wholly on one ſide.

And now, my brethren, let me for once perſuade and prevail with you for your good: let me be ſo happy as to ſay ſomething that may ſink into your hearts, and incline your minds to peace and good agreement with one another, "have ſalt in your "ſelves," ſays our bleſſed SAVIOUR the great peace maker, "and peace one with another." By ſalt is meant grace and ſpiritual wiſdom, and if that do but rule and ſway in our hearts, we ſhall then endeavour, "if it be poſſible, and as much as in us "lies, to live peaceably with all men." If we "have ſalt in our ſelves," that is, if we be wiſe, we will then certainly "have peace one with another."

And if we were but once come to this healing temper, in this divided and diſtracted nation, we ſhould not then need to fear "all the power of the "enemy." And this our enemies know full well: and therefore their chief policy and wiſdom is, and ever hath been, to divide us; and it will be our own great folly and weakneſs if we ſuffer our ſelves to be divided: for who that is wiſe will take counſel and advice

SERM. XXXVII.

advice from an enemy? But if we could agree and hold together, then our Jeruſalem would be "as a "city that is compact together," ſtrong and impregnable.

Let us then be inſtructed, and know, "in this "our day, the things which belong to peace, before "they be hid from our eyes." And let us all earneſtly endeavour "and pray for the peace of Jeruſalem: "they ſhall proſper that love her," ſays the Pſalmiſt, and they do not love her, that do not ſeek her peace, and endeavour by all means to procure it: "that peace may be within her walls, and proſperi-"ty within her palaces:" The one cannot be without the other: without peace there can be no proſperity. And to go on with the words of the Pſalmiſt, let every one of us ſay, yea let us all with one heart and voice ſay, "for our brethren and compani-"ons ſake," for the ſake of our proteſtant brethren all the world over, let us ſay, "peace be within thee: "for the houſe of the LORD our GOD," for the ſake of our holy religion, and of that excellent church whereof we all are, or ought to be members, let every one of us ſay, "I will ſeek thy good."

Pſal. cxxii.

And what greater good can we do to the beſt religion, how can we better ſerve the intereſt of it in all parts of the world, than by being at peace and unity amongſt our ſelves, here in England? upon whom the eyes of all the Proteſtants abroad are fixed, as the glory of the reformation, and the great bulwark and ſupport of it.

That ſo under the providence of almighty GOD, and the conduct of two ſuch excellent princes as he hath now bleſſed us withal: the one ſo brave and valiant,

valiant, and both of them ſo wiſe, ſo good, ſo religious, we may at laſt arrive at a firm eſtabliſhment, and become "like mount Zion that cannot" be moved; the perfection of beauty and ſtrength, and the admiration and "joy of the whole earth;" which GOD of his infinite goodneſs grant, for his mercies ſake in JESUS CHRIST: to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, thankſgiving and praiſe both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXVIII.

A conſcience void of offence towards GOD and men.

Preached before the Queen at White-hall, February 27, 1690-1.

ACTS xxiv. *16.*

And herein do I exerciſe my ſelf, to have always a conſcience void of offence towards GOD, *and towards men.*

THESE words are part of the defence which St. Paul made for himſelf, before Fælix the Roman governor. SERM. XXXVIII.

In which he firſt of all vindicates himſelf from the charge of ſedition, ver. 12. "they neither found me "in the temple, diſputing with any man; neither "raiſing up the people, neither in the ſynagogue, "nor

SERM. XXXVIII.

" nor in the city ;" that is, they could not charge him with making any diſturbance either in church or ſtate.

After this, he makes a free and open profeſſion of his religion, ver. 14. " But this I confeſs, that " after the way which they call hereſy, ſo worſhip " I the GOD of my fathers, believing all things " which are written in the law and the prophets :" here he declares the ſcriptures to be the rule of his faith, in oppoſition to the oral tradition of the Phariſees.

More particularly he aſſerts the doctrine of the reſurrection, which was a principal article both of the Jewiſh and the Chriſtian religion, ver. 15. " and I " have hope alſo towards GOD, that there ſhall be " a reſurrection, both of the juſt and the unjuſt."

And having made this declaration of his faith, he gives an account of his life, in the words of the text, ver. 16. " and herein do I exerciſe my ſelf, to " have always a conſcience void of offence towards " GOD, and towards men."

Herein, ἐν τούτῳ, that is, " in this work," do I employ my ſelf; or as others render it, " in the " mean time," whilſt I am in this world ; or as others, I think moſt probably, " for this cauſe and reaſon," ἐν τούτῳ, for διὰ τοῦτο, " for this reaſon," becauſe I believe a reſurrection, therefore have I a conſcientious care of my life, and all the actions of it.

The diſcourſe I intend to make upon theſe words, ſhall be compriſed in theſe following particulars.

I. Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice, " to have a conſcience void of offence to- " wards GOD, and towards men."

II. Here

II. Here is his constancy and perseverance in this course; to have "always" a conscience void of offence. SERM. XXXVIII.

III. Here is his earnest care and endeavour to this purpose, "I exercise my self."

IV. Here is the principle and immediate guide of his actions, which St. Paul here tells us was his "conscience."

V. I shall lay down some rules and directions for the keeping of a good conscience.

VI. Here is the great motive and encouragement to this, which St. Paul tells us was the belief of a resurrection, and of a future state of rewards and punishments consequent upon it; "for this cause;" because "I hope for a resurrection both of the just "and unjust, I exercise my self to have always a con-"science void of offence towards GOD, and towards "men." I shall speak but briefly to the three first of these particulars, that I may be larger in the rest.

I. Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice. It hath regard to the whole compass of his duty, as it respects GOD and man. "I exercise my "self," says St. Paul, "to have a conscience void "of offence towards GOD, and towards men." And this distribution of our duty, under these two general heads, is very frequent in scripture. The decalogue refers our duty to these two heads: and accordingly our SAVIOUR comprehends the whole duty of man in these two great commandments, the love of GOD and of our neighbour, Matth. xxii. 38. "Upon these two commandments hang all the "law and the prophets," that is, all the moral precepts which are dispersed up and down in the law and the prophets, may be referred to these two general heads. I.

SERM. XXXVIII.

II. Here is his conſtancy and perſeverance in this courſe. St. Paul ſays, that he exerciſed himſelf to have always a conſcience void of offence; διαπαντὸς, continually, at all times, in the whole courſe of his life. We muſt not only make conſcience of our ways by fits and ſtarts, but in the general courſe and tenour of our lives and actions, without any balks and intermiſſions.

II.

There are ſome that will refrain from groſſer ſins, and be very ſtrict at ſome ſeaſons; as during the time of a ſolemn repentance, and for ſome days before they receive the ſacrament; and perhaps for a little while after it: and when theſe devout ſeaſons are over they let themſelves looſe again to their former lewd and vicious courſe: but religion ſhould be a conſtant frame and temper of mind, diſcovering itſelf in the habitual courſe of our lives and actions.

III. III. Here is likewiſe a very earneſt care and endeavour to this purpoſe. Herein do I exerciſe myſelf, ſays St. Paul. The word ἀσκῶ, which is here rendered exerciſe, is a word of a very intenſe ſignification, and does denote that St. Paul applied himſelf to this buſineſs with all his care and might, and that he made it his earneſt ſtudy and endeavour: and ſo we muſt; we muſt take great care to underſtand our duty, and to be rightly informed concerning good and evil, that we may not miſtake the nature of things, and "call good evil, and evil good:" we muſt apply our minds in good earneſt to be thoroughly inſtructed in all the parts of our duty, that ſo we may not be at a loſs what to do when we are called to the practice of it: and when we know our duty, we muſt be true and honeſt to our ſelves, and very

very careful and conſcientious in the diſcharge and performance of it. I proceed in the SERM. XXXVIII.

IVth place, to conſider the principle and immediate guide of our actions, which St. Paul here tells us, was his conſcience; "I exerciſe my ſelf to have al- "ways a conſcience void of offence:" by which he does not only mean a reſolution to follow the dictate and direction of his conſcience, but likewiſe a due care to inform his conſcience aright, that he might not in any thing trangreſs the law of God, and his duty. IV.

Conſcience is the great principle of moral actions, and our guide in matter of ſin and duty. It is not the law and rule of our actions, that the law of God only is; but it is our immediate guide and director, telling us what is the law of God and our duty.

But becauſe conſcience is a word of a very large and various ſignification, I ſhall endeavour very briefly to give you the true notion of it. Now in common ſpeech concerning conſcience, every man is repreſented as having a kind of court and tribunal in his own breaſt, where he tries himſelf and all his actions: and conſcience, under one notion or other, ſuſtains all parts in this trial: the court is called the court of a man's conſcience, and the bar at which the ſinner ſtands impleaded, is called the bar of conſcience: conſcience alſo is the accuſer; and it is the record and regiſter of our crimes, in which the memory of them is preſerved: and it is the witneſs which gives teſtimony for or againſt us; hence are thoſe expreſſions of "the teſtimony of our conſciences," and that "a man's own conſcience is to him inſtead "of a thouſand witneſſes:" and it is likewiſe the judge which declares the law, and what we ought,

or

SERM. XXXVIII. or ought not to have done, in ſuch or ſuch a caſe, and accordingly paſſeth ſentence upon us by acquitting or condemning us. Thus, according to common uſe of ſpeech, conſcience ſuſtains all imaginable parts in this ſpiritual court: it is the court, and the bench, and the bar; the accuſer, and witneſs, and regiſter, and all.

But I ſhall only at preſent conſider conſcience in the moſt common and famous notion of it, as it is a principle or faculty whereby we judge of moral good and evil, and do accordingly direct and govern our actions: ſo that in ſhort, conſcience is nothing elſe but "the judgment of a man's own mind concerning the morality of his actions;" that is, the good, or evil, or indifference of them; telling us what things are commanded by GOD, and conſequently are our duty; what things are forbidden by him, and conſequently are ſinful; what things are neither commanded nor forbidden, and conſequently are indifferent. I proceed in the

V. Vth place, to give ſome rules and directions for the keeping of a conſcience void of offence. And they ſhall be theſe following:

Firſt, never in any caſe to act contrary to the perſuaſion and conviction of our conſcience. For that certainly is a great ſin, and that which properly offends the conſcience and renders us guilty; guilt being nothing elſe but trouble ariſing in our minds from a conſciouſneſs of having done contrary to what we are verily perſuaded was our duty: and though perhaps this perſuaſion is not always well grounded, yet the guilt is the ſame ſo long as this perſuaſion continues; becauſe every man's conſcience is a kind of

of god to him, and accuſeth or abſolves him according to the preſent perſuaſion of it. And therefore we ought to take great care not to offend againſt the light and conviction of our own mind. SERM. XXXVIII.

Secondly, we ſhould be very careful to inform our conſciences aright, that we may not miſtake concerning our duty; or if we do, that our error and miſtake may not be groſly wilful and faulty.

And this rule is the more neceſſary to be conſidered and regarded by us, becauſe generally men are apt to think it a ſufficient excuſe for any thing, that they did it according to their conſcience. But this will appear to be a dangerous miſtake, and of very pernicious conſequence to the ſouls of men, if we conſider theſe two things.

1ſt, That men may be guilty of the moſt heinous ſins in following an erroneous conſcience.

2ly, And theſe ſins may prove damnable without a particular repentance for them.

1ſt, That men may be guilty of the moſt heinous ſins in following an erroneous conſcience. Men may neglect and abuſe themſelves ſo far, as to do ſome of the worſt and wickedeſt things in the world with a perſuaſion that they do well. Our SAVIOUR tells his diſciples that "the time ſhould come" when the Jews ſhould "put them to death, thinking they did "GOD good ſervice:" nay the Jews murthered the Son of GOD himſelf through ignorance and a falſe perſuaſion of mind: "Father, forgive them," ſays our bleſſed LORD, when he was breathing out his ſoul upon the croſs, "for they know not what they "do." And St. Peter, after he had charged the Jews "with killing the prince of life," he preſently adds, "I wot John xvi. 2. Luk. xxiii. 34. Acts. iii. 17.

SERM. XXXVIII.

" I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did al-
" ſo your rulers." And St. Paul, in mitigation of that great crime, ſays, " had they known, they
" would not have crucified the LORD of life and
Acts xxvi. 9. " glory :" and concerning himſelf he tells us, " that
" he verily thought with himſelf, that he ought to
" do many things againſt the name of JESUS of Na-
" zareth :" and yet notwithſtanding that he acted herein according to the perſuaſion of his conſcience, he tells us that he had been a blaſphemer, and a perſecutor, and injurious, and a murtherer, and in a word, the greateſt of ſinners. So that men may be guilty of the greateſt ſins in following an erroneous conſcience. And,

2ly, Theſe ſins may prove damnable, without a particular repentance for them. Where the ignorance and miſtake is not groſly wilful, there GOD will accept of a general repentance; but where it is groſly wilful, great ſins committed upon it are not pardoned without a particular repentance for them: and an error which proceeds from want of ordinary human care and due government of a man's ſelf, is in a great degree wilful: as when it proceeds from an unreaſonable and obſtinate prejudice, from great pride and ſelf conceit, and contempt of council and inſtruction; or from a viſible biaſs of ſelf intereſt, or when it is accompanied with a furious paſſion and zeal, prompting men to cruel and horrible things, contrary to the light of nature and the common ſenſe of humanity: an error proceeding from ſuch cauſes, and producing ſuch effects, is wilful in ſo high a degree, that whatever evil is done in virtue of it is almoſt equally faulty with a direct and wilful violation of the law of GOD.

The

The ignorance and mistake doth indeed make the person so mistaken more capable of forgiveness, which is the ground of our SAVIOUR's prayer for his murtherers, "Father, forgive them, for they know "not what they do:" St. Paul likewise tells us, that he found mercy upon this account, "nevertheless, says he, I obtained mercy, because I did it "ignorantly, and in unbelief," that is, through a false persuasion of mind, not believing it to be a sin: and yet he did not obtain this mercy, without a particular conviction of his fault and repentance for it. And St. Peter after he had convinced the Jews of their great sin in crucifying CHRIST, though they did it ignorantly, yet he exhorts them to a particular and deep repentance for it, as necessary to the pardon and forgiveness of it: and therefore after he had said, "I wot that through ignorance ye did "it, as did also your rulers," he immediately adds, "repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your "sins may be blotted out." SERM. XXXVIII. 1 Tim. i. 13. Acts iii. 19.

So that it highly concerns men to consider what opinions they embrace in order to practise, and not to suffer themselves to be hurried away by an unreasonable prejudice and a heady passion, without a due and calm examination of things, nor to be over-born by pride, or humour, or partiality, or interest, or by a furious and extravagant zeal: because proportionably to the voluntariness of our error will be the guilt of our practice pursuant to that error. Indeed where our error is involuntary, and morally invincible, GOD will consider it, and make allowance for it; but where it is voluntary, and occasioned by our own gross faults and neglect, we are bound

SERM. XXXVIII.

to conſider, and rectify our miſtake: for whatever we do contrary to the law of GOD and our duty, in virtue of that falſe perſuaſion, we do it at our utmoſt peril, and muſt be anſwerable to GOD for it, notwithſtanding we did it according to the dictate of our conſcience.

A third rule is this, that in all doubts of conſcience we endeavour to be equal and impartial, and do not lay all the weight of our doubts on one ſide, when there is perhaps as much or greater reaſon of doubting on the other: and conſequently, that we be as tractable and eaſy to receive ſatisfaction of our doubts in one kind as in another, and be equally contented to have them over-ruled in caſes that are equal: I mean, where our paſſions and intereſts are not concerned, as well as where they are. And if we do not do this, it is a ſign that we are partial in our pretences of conſcience, and that we do not aim merely at the peace and ſatisfaction of our own minds, but have ſome other intereſt and deſign.

For it is a very ſuſpicious thing, when men's doubts and ſcruples bear all on one ſide, eſpecially if it be on that ſide which is againſt charity, and peace, and obedience to government, whether eccleſiaſtical or civil: in this caſe I think that a mere doubt, and much more a ſcruple, may, nay, ought in reaſon to be over-ruled by the command of authority, by the opinion and judgment of wiſe and good men, and in conſideration of the publick peace, and of the unity and edification of the church.

Not that a man is in any caſe to go againſt the clear perſuaſion and conviction of his own mind, but when there is only a meer doubt concerning the

lawfulneſs or unlawfulneſs of a thing, it ſeems to me in that caſe very reaſonable that a man ſhould ſuffer a mere doubt or ſcruple to be over-ruled by any of thoſe weighty conſiderations which I mentioned before. SERM. XXXVIII.

The fourth rule is, that all pretences of conſcience are vehemently to be ſuſpected, which are accompanied with turbulent paſſion and a furious zeal. It is a hundred to one but ſuch a man's conſcience is in the wrong. It is an excellent ſaying of St. James "the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs "of GOD;" that is, the fierce paſſions of men are no proper inſtruments to promote religion, and to accompliſh any thing that is good. And therefore if any man be tranſported with a wild zeal, and pretend conſcience for his fury, it is great odds but he is in an error: none are ſo likely to judge amiſs, as they whoſe minds are clouded and blinded by their paſſions, Jam. i. 20.

Nubila mens eſt,
Hæc ubi regnant. Boeth.

And if men would carefully obſerve themſelves, they might almoſt certainly know when they act upon reaſon and a true principle of conſcience. A good conſcience is eaſy to it ſelf, and pleaſed with it's own doings; but when a man's paſſion and diſcontent are a weight upon his judgment, and do, as it were, bear down his conſcience to a compliance, no wonder if this puts a man's mind into a very unnatural and uneaſy ſtate.

There can hardly be a broader ſign that a man is in the wrong, than to rage and be confident: becauſe

SERM. XXXVIII.

this plainly ſhews that the man's conſcience is not ſettled upon clear reaſon, but that he hath brought over his conſcience to his intereſt, or to his humour and diſcontent.

And though ſuch a man may be ſo far blinded by his paſſion as not to ſee what is right, yet methinks he ſhould feel himſelf to be in the wrong by his being ſo very hot and impatient.

Art thou ſure thou art in the right? thou art a happy man, and haſt reaſon to be pleaſed: What cauſe then, what need is there of being angry? Hath a man reaſon on his ſide? what would he have more? Why then does he fly out into paſſion? which as it gives no ſtrength to a bad argument, ſo I could never yet ſee that it was any grace and advantage to a good one.

Of the great evil, and the perpetual miſtake of this furious kind of zeal, the Jews are a lively and a lamentable example, in their carriage towards our bleſſed SAVIOUR and his apoſtles: and more particularly St. Paul, when he perſecuted the Chriſtians from a falſe and erroneous perſuaſion of his conſcience. Hear how St. Paul deſcribes himſelf and his own doings whilſt he was acted by an erroneous conſcience: "I perſecuted," ſays he, "this way un-
Acts xxii. 4. "to the death, binding and delivering into priſon "both men and women:" and in another chapter,
Acts xxvi. 9. "I verily thought with my ſelf, that I ought to do "many things againſt the name of JESUS of Naza-"reth:" here was his erroneous conſcience. Let us next ſee what were the unhappy concomitants and effects of it; ver. 10, 11. "which things," ſays he, "I alſo did in Jeruſalem, and many of the ſaints I "ſhut

" ſhut up in priſon, and when they were put to " death, I gave my voice againſt them, and puniſh- " ed them oft in every ſynagogue, and compelled " them to blaſpheme; and being exceedingly mad " againſt them, I perſecuted them even to ſtrange " cities." When conſcience tranſports men with ſuch a furious zeal and paſſion, it is hardly ever in the right; or if it ſhould happen to be ſo, they who are thus tranſported, by their ungracious way of maintaining the truth, and their ill management of a good cauſe, have found out a cunning way to be in the wrong, even when they are in the right. SERM. XXXVIII.

Fifthly, All pretences of conſcience are likewiſe to be ſuſpected, which are not accompanied with modeſty and humility, and a teachable temper and diſpoſition, willing to learn and to be better informed. A proud and conceited temper of mind is very likely to run into miſtakes; becauſe pride and fulneſs of a man's ſelf does keep out knowledge, and obſtructs all the paſſages by which wiſdom and inſtruction ſhould enter into men: beſides that it provokes GOD to abandon men to their own follies and miſtakes; for " GOD reſiſteth the proud," but " the " meek will he guide in judgment," and " will give " more grace" and wiſdom " to the humble." When men are once come to this, to think themſelves wiſer than their teachers, and to deſpiſe and caſt off their guides, no wonder if then they go aſtray.

Laſtly, let us be ſure to mind that which is our plain and unqueſtionable duty: the great things of religion, wherein the life and ſubſtance of it doth conſiſt; and " the things" likewiſe " which make " for peace, and whereby we may edify one ano- " ther :"

SERM. XXXVIII. "ther:" and let us not ſuffer our diſputes about leſſer matters to prejudice and hinder our main duty: but let it be our great care not to fail in thoſe greater things which are comprehended under the two great commandments of the law, the love of GOD and of our neighbour: let us be ſtrict and conſtant in our piety and devotion towards GOD; chaſt and temperate in reference to our ſelves; juſt and honeſt, kind and charitable, humble and meek, patient and peaceable towards all men; ſubmiſſive and obedient to our ſuperiors, natural, civil, and ſpiritual. A due regard to theſe great virtues of the chriſtian life is the way to "keep a conſcience void "of offence towards GOD, and towards men:" and ſurely the beſt means to have our doubts cleared about matters of leſſer moment in religion, is heartily to ſet about the practice of the great and unqueſtionable duties of it: ſo our bleſſed SAVIOUR hath aſſured us, that "if any man will do the will "of GOD, he ſhall know of his doctrine whether it "be of GOD." I come now in the

John vii. 17.

VI. VIth and laſt place, to conſider the great motive and encouragement to this conſcientious care of our lives and actions; which St. Paul here tells us was his belief of a reſurrection, and of the rewards and puniſhments conſequent upon it; "I have hope," ſays he, "towards GOD, that there ſhall be a reſur-"rection both of the juſt and unjuſt:" for this cauſe therefore "I exerciſe my ſelf to have always a "conſcience void of offence toward GOD, and to-"ward men."

If

If we believe the reſurrection of the dead, and a future judgment, we ought to be very careful to diſcharge a good conſcience now, in order to the rendring of a good account hereafter; that "we "may be ſincere and without offence, with reſpect "to the day of CHRIST," as the apoſtle expreſſeth it. For when that great day of recompences ſhall come, we ſhall moſt aſſuredly find that nothing will then raiſe our hearts, and make us to lift up our heads with joy, like the witneſs of a good conſcience: and therefore we ſhould make that our conſtant care and companion now, which will then be our great comfort and rejoicing, a good conſcience and the teſtimony of it, "that in all ſimplicity and godly "ſincerity we have had our converſation in the "world."

And on the contrary, when we come to appear before the great judge of the world, nothing will fill our minds with ſo much terror, and our faces with ſo much confuſion, as the clamorous accuſations of a guilty conſcience; which will be "more than a "thouſand witneſſes" againſt us, and will anticipate our condemnation, and paſs almoſt as ſevere a ſentence upon us as the judge himſelf can.

This is that which will make the ſinner to droop, and to hang down his head for ever: and one of the principal ingredients of his miſery and torment will be the perpetual regret and remorſe of his own mind for his wilful wickedneſs and folly; which will kindle a fire within him as hot as that without him, and as hard to be quenched.

This conſideration ought to have a mighty operation upon us to make us very careful to have conſciences

SERM. XXXVIII.

ſciences void of offence now, that they may be free from torment and anguiſh hereafter: that when we ſhall come into the other world, we may not be eternally diſpleaſed with our ſelves, and enraged at our own doings; but may carry with us thither conſciences clear of all guilt, either by innocency, or by repentance.

The firm belief of a future ſtate of eternal happineſs or miſery in another world is the great weight or ſpring that ſets a going thoſe two powerful principles of human activity, the hopes and the fears of men; and is in it's nature ſo fitted to raiſe theſe paſſions to that degree, that did not experience ſhew us the contrary, one would think it morally impoſſible for human nature to reſiſt the mighty force of it.

All men are ſenſible, more or leſs, at one time or other, of the true force of theſe arguments; but the miſchief is, that in ſome perſons they work quite the wrong way, and inſtead of leading men to repentance, they drive them to infidelity: they cannot deny the force of theſe arguments, if they were true; but that they may avoid the force of them, they will not believe them to be true: and ſo far they are in the right, that granting theſe things to be true, they cannot but acknowledge that they ought to live otherwiſe than they do: but here is their fatal miſcarriage, that being reſolved upon an evil courſe, ſince they cannot reconcile their practice with ſuch principles as theſe, they will fit their principles to their practice; and ſo they will believe nothing at all of the rewards and puniſhments of another world, leſt this ſhould diſturb them in their courſe: vain men! as if heaven and hell muſt needs vaniſh and

diſ-

disappear, because some witty but wicked men have no mind to believe them.

These men are infidels in their own defence, and merely for the quiet of their own minds; that their consciences may not perpetually rate them, and fly in their faces. For a right belief and an evil conscience are but unsuitable companions; they are quarrelsom neighbours, and must needs live very uneasily by one another. He that believes the principles of religion, and yet is conscious to himself that he hath lived contrary to them, and still continues to do so, how can he possibly have any peace and quiet in his mind? unless like Jonah he can sleep in a storm, and his conscience be, as it were, "seared "with a hot iron:" for if his conscience be awake, and in any degree sensible, the evident danger of eternal ruin, continually hanging over him, must in reason either drive him to repentance or to despair: if so forcible and violent an argument can make no impression upon us, we are stupid and betwiched, we are lost and undone, we are wretched and miserable for ever.

But besides the future reward of a holy and conscientious course, which is "unspeakable and full of glo-"ry;" it hath also this present fruit, this earnest, as I may say, and ready money in hand, the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, which is much more valuable "than thousands of gold and sil-"ver;" the unspeakable comfort whereof every man will then find, when he hath most need of it: for it will be matter of great joy to him, not only under the sorest afflictions and calamities of life, but even at the hour of death; when the miseries of life

SERM. XXXVIII.

oppreſs him, and the ſorrows of death compaſs him about, and the pangs of it are ready to take hold of him.

There is certainly no ſuch comfort under the evils and afflictions of this life, as a faithful witneſs in our breaſts of our own innocency and integrity: when we are afflicted by GOD, or perſecuted and reviled by men, it cannot but be a mighty conſolation to us, to be conſcious to our ſelves of our own ſincerity. For though no man can acquit and juſtify himſelf before GOD, as to the perfect innocency of his life, in which ſenſe St. Paul ſays, that "though he knew "nothing by himſelf, yet was he not thereby juſti-"fied;" I ſay, though no man can plead perfect innocency, yet as to the general courſe and tenor of an unblameable life, a good man may appeal to GOD, and even when he afflicts him, may look upon him as a tender and compaſſionate father, and not as an angry and revengeful judge.

1 Cor. iv. 4.

With this, holy and patient Job, under all thoſe terrible diſaſters and calamities which befel him, was able in ſome meaſure to comfort himſelf: after he had loſt all, and he had a great deal to loſe; when he was forſaken of all other comfort, even the charitable opinion of his beſt friends concerning his ſincerity. In theſe ſad and diſconſolate circumſtances, what was it that bore up his ſpirit? nothing but the conſcience of his own integrity. See with what reſolution and conſtancy of mind he aſſerts and maintains it: "I will not, ſays he, remove mine inte-"grity from me: my righteouſneſs will I hold faſt, "and will not let it go: mine heart ſhall not reproach "me, ſo long as I live." You ſee, that when eve-

Job xxv. 5, 6.

ry

ry thing elſe was gone, his integrity ſtuck by him, and ſupported him to the laſt. SERM. XXXVIII.

And as to perſecutions and ſufferings from men, our own innocency, and the goodneſs of our cauſe, will be our beſt comfort under them: when we are not guilty to our ſelves that we have deſerved them from men, and are inwardly aſſured that whatever we patiently ſuffer for GOD and a good conſcience, will all turn to our account another day, and "work for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

This was that which ſupported the firſt Chriſtians, that noble army of martyrs, under all thoſe bitter and cruel perſecutions, which had otherwiſe been beyond all human patience to have endured: this comforted them in all their tribulations; "our re-"joicing," ſays St. Paul, "is this, the teſtimony "of our conſciences, that in ſimplicity and godly "ſincerity, we have had our converſation in the "world."

So likewiſe under that inferior but equally malicious ſort of perſecution, of which this age is ſo very profuſe and prodigal, I mean the cauſeleſs calumnies and reproaches of men; if under theſe we can but approve our conſciences to GOD, the uncharitable cenſures of men are not ſo much to be regarded by us: ſome impreſſion they will make upon a tender mind, but we muſt not, if we can help it, let them ſink too deep into our ſpirits: "if our hearts con- 1 Joh. iii. "demn us not, we may have confidence towards 21. "GOD;" and then ſurely much more towards men: if GOD and our own conſciences do but acquit us, methinks it ſhould be no ſuch difficult matter to bear the ſlanders and hard cenſures of men.

SERM. XXXVIII.

But above all other times, the comfort of a good conſcience is moſt ſenſible, and moſt conſiderable at the hour of death: for as nothing dejects a man's ſpirits more, and ſends him down with ſo much ſorrow to the grave, as the guilt of an evil conſcience; what terror and anguiſh, what rage and deſpair do ſeize upon a ſinner at that time, when he reflects upon what he hath done, and conſiders what he is like to ſuffer? So on the other hand, there is nothing that revives and raiſes the fainting ſpirits of a dying man, like the conſcience of a holy and uſeful life, which hath brought glory to GOD, and good to men. "The wicked," ſays Solomon, "is "driven away in his wickedneſs," that is, he is carried out of the world, as it were, in a ſtorm and tempeſt: "but the righteous hath hope in his "death;" he uſually dies calmly and comfortably: "Mark the perfect man," ſays David, "and behold "the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

Prov. xiv. 32.

Pſ. xxxvii. 37.

If a man be conſcious to himſelf that he hath ſincerely endeavoured to keep the commandments of GOD, and to do the things which pleaſe him: if he hath lived inoffenſively, and, as St. Paul ſaith of himſelf, "in all good conſcience before GOD and "men;" what an unſpeakable conſolation muſt it be to him, in that dark and gloomy time, and when he is "walking through the valley of the ſhadow of "death," then "to fear no evil?" and to be able with our bleſſed SAVIOUR to ſay, though in a much inferior meaſure and degree, "Father, I have glo-"rified thee on the earth, I have finiſhed the work "which thou haſt given me to do:" and to be able to look death in the face with the like courage and conſtancy

Acts xxiii. 1.

John xvii. 4.

SERM. XXXVIII.

constancy of mind as St. Paul did when he saw it approaching towards him: "I am now," says he, "ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the LORD the righteous judge shall give me at that day." A comfortable death, that is free from the stings and upbraidings, the terrors and tortures, the confusion and amazement of a guilty conscience, is a happiness so desirable, as to be well worth the best care and endeavour of a man's whole life. 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

Let us then have a conscientious regard to the whole compass of our duty, and, with St. Paul, "let us exercise our selves to have always a conscience void of offence towards GOD, and towards men:" and let us never do any thing whereby we shall offer violence to the light of our minds. GOD hath given us this principle to be our constant guide and companion; and whoever, after due care to inform himself aright, does sincerely follow the dictate and direction of this guide, shall never fatally miscarry: but whoever goes against the clear dictate and conviction of his conscience, in so doing he undermines the foundation of his own comfort and peace, and sins against GOD and his own soul.

And to the end we may keep our consciences clear of guilt, we should frequently examine our selves, and look back upon the actions of our lives, and call our selves to a strict account for them; that whereinsoever we have failed of innocency, we may make it up by repentance; and may get our con-

SERM. XXXVIII.

conſciences cleared of guilt by pardon and forgiveneſs: and if we do not do this, we cannot with confidence rely upon the teſtimony of our conſciences; becauſe many great ſins may ſlip out of our memories without a particular repentance for them, which yet do require and ſtand in need of a particular repentance.

Eſpecially, we ſhould ſearch our conſciences more narrowly at theſe more ſolemn times of repentance, and when we are preparing our ſelves to receive the holy Sacrament: and if at theſe times our hearts do accuſe and condemn us for any thing, we ſhould not only heartily lament and bewail it before GOD, but ſincerely reſolve by GOD's grace to reform in that particular, and from that time to break off that ſin which we have then repented of, and have aſked forgiveneſs of GOD for: for if after we have repented of it, we return to it again, we wound our conſciences afreſh, and involve them in a new guilt.

In the laſt place, we ſhould reverence our conſciences, and ſtand in awe of them, and have a great regard to their teſtimony and verdict: for conſcience is a domeſtick judge, and a kind of familiar GOD: and therefore, next to the ſupreme majeſty of heaven and earth, every man ſhould be afraid to offend his own reaſon and conſcience, which, whenever we knowingly do amiſs, will beat us with many ſtripes, and handle us more ſeverely than the greateſt enemy we have in the world: ſo that next to the dreadful ſentence of the great day, every man hath reaſon to dread the ſentence of his own conſcience. "GOD indeed is greater than our hearts, and knoweth "all things;" but under him we have the greateſt reaſon

reaſon to fear the judgment of our own conſciences: for nothing but that can give us comfort, and nothing can create ſo much trouble and diſquiet to us. SERM. XXXVIII.

And though the judgment of our conſciences be not always the judgment of GOD, yet we have great reaſon to have great regard to it; and that upon ſeveral accounts, which I ſhall but briefly mention, and ſo conclude.

Firſt, becauſe the judgment of our conſcience is free from any compulſion. No body can force it from us, whether we will or no; and make us to paſs ſentence againſt our ſelves, whether we ſee reaſon for it or not.

Secondly, the ſentence of our own conſciences is very likely to be impartial, at leaſt not too hard on the ſevere ſide; becauſe men naturally love themſelves, and are too apt to be favourable in their own caſe. All the world cannot bribe a man againſt himſelf: there is no man whoſe mind is not either diſtempered by melancholy, or deluded by falſe principles, that is apt to be credulous againſt himſelf, and his own intereſt and peace.

Thirdly, the judgment which our conſcience paſſeth upon our own actions, is upon the moſt intimate and certain knowledge of them, and of their true motives and ends. We may eaſily be deceived in our judgment of the actions of other men, and may think them to be much better or worſe than in truth they are: becauſe we cannot certainly tell with what mind they were done, and what circumſtances there may be to excuſe or aggravate them; how ſtrong the temptation was, or how weak the judgment of him that was ſeduced by it into error and folly.

SERM. XXXVIII.

But we are conſcious to all the ſecret ſprings, and motives, and circumſtances of our own actions: we can deſcend into our own hearts, and dive to the bottom of them, and ſearch into the moſt retired corners of our intentions and ends; which none, beſides our ſelves, but only GOD can do; for excepting him only, "none knows the things of a man "but the ſpirit of a man which is in him."

Fourthly, the ſentence of our conſcience is peremptory and inexorable, and there is no way to avoid it. Thou mayeſt poſſibly fly from the wrath of other men to the uttermoſt parts of the earth, but thou canſt not ſtir one ſtep from thy ſelf: in vain ſhalt thou call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on thee, and hide thee from the ſight of thine own conſcience.

Wretched and miſerable man! when thou haſt offended and wounded thy conſcience: for whither canſt thou go, to eſcape the eye of this witneſs, the terror of this judge, the torment of this executioner? A man may as ſoon get rid of himſelf, and quit his own being, as fly from the ſharp accuſations and ſtinging guilt of his own conſcience; which will perpetually haunt him, till it be done away by repentance and forgiveneſs.

We account it a fearful thing to be haunted by evil ſpirits, and yet the ſpirit of a man which is in him, throughly affrighted with it's own guilt, may be a more ghaſtly and amazing ſpectacle than all the devils in hell: there is no ſuch frightful apparition in the world, as a man's own guilty and terrified conſcience ſtaring him in the face: a "ſpirit" that is thus "wounded, who can bear?"

To

To conclude; let these considerations prevail with us always to live, not with regard to the opinion of others, which may be grounded upon mistake, or may not indeed be their opinion, but their flattery; but with regard to the judgment of our own conscience, which though it may sometimes be mistaken, can never be bribed and corrupted: we may be hypocrites to others and base flatterers, but our own consciences whenever they are thoroughly awakened are always sincere, and deal truly with us, and speak to us as they think. SERM. XXXVIII.

Therefore whatever we say or do, let it be sincere: for though hypocrisy may for a while preserve our esteem and reputation with others, yet it can signify nothing to the peace of our own minds: and then what will it avail us to conceal any thing from other men, when we can hide nothing that we say or do from our own consciences?

The sum of all is this: if we would keep a conscience void of offence, let us always be calm and considerate, and have the patience to examine things thoroughly and impartially: let us be humble and willing to learn, and never too proud and stiff to be better informed: let us do what we can to free our selves from prejudice and passion, from self-conceit and self-interest, which are often too strong a bias upon the judgments of the best men, as we may see every day in very sad and melancholy instances: and having taken all due care to inform our consciences aright, let us follow the judgment of our minds in what we do; and then we have done what we can to please GOD.

And if we would always take this care to keep a good conſcience, we ſhould always be eaſy, and good company to our ſelves: but if we offend our conſciences, by doing contrary to the clear dictate and conviction of them, we make the unhappieſt breach in the world; we ſtir up a quarrel in our own breaſts, and arm our own minds againſt our ſelves; we create an enemy to our ſelves in our own boſoms, and fall out with the beſt and moſt inſeparable companion of our lives.

And on the contrary, a good conſcience will be a continual feaſt, and will give us that comfort and courage in an evil day which nothing elſe can: and then whatever happens to us, we may "commit "our ſelves to GOD in well doing, as into the hands "of a faithful creator:" to whom with our bleſſed SAVIOUR and Redeemer, and the Holy Ghoſt the Comforter, be all honour and glory, now and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXIX.

How to keep a truly religious fast.

Preached before the Queen at Whitehall, September the 16th, 1690.

ZECH. vii. 5.

Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, DID YE AT ALL FAST UNTO ME, EVEN UNTO ME?

SERM. XXXIX.

IN the beginning of this chapter the people of the Jews, who were then rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, and had already far advanced the work, though it was not perfectly finished till about two years after, send to the priests and the prophets, to enquire of them, whether they should still continue the fast of the fifth month, which they had begun in Babylon and continued to observe during the seventy years of their captivity, in a sad remembrance of the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem; or should not now rather turn it into a day of feasting and gladness?

To this enquiry GOD by his prophet returns an answer in this, and the following chapter. And first he expostulates with them concerning those their monthly fasts, whether they did indeed deserve that name, and were not rather a mere shew and pretence

SERM. XXXIX.

of a religious faſt, verſes 4, 5. "Then came the "word of the LORD of hoſts unto me, ſaying; "Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the "prieſts, ſaying, When ye faſted and mourned in "the fifth and ſeventh month, even thoſe ſeventy "years, did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?" The enquiry was particularly concerning the faſt of the fifth month, becauſe the occaſion of that was more conſiderable than of all the other; but the anſwer of GOD mentions the faſts of the fifth and ſeventh months, theſe two being probably obſerved with greater ſolemnity than the other.

But for our clearer underſtanding of this, it will be requiſite to conſider the original and occaſion of all their monthly faſts: which, as appears from other places of ſcripture, in ſhort, was this: when the Jews were carried away captive into Babylon, in a deep ſenſe of this great judgment of GOD upon them for their ſins, and of the heavy affliction which they lay under, they appointed four annual faſts, which they obſerved during their ſeventy years captivity, viz. the faſt of the fourth month, in remembrance of the enemies breaking through the wall of Jeruſalem, which we find mentioned, Jer. lii. 6, 7. The faſt of the fifth month, in memory of the deſtruction of the city and temple of Jeruſalem, verſes 12, 13. The faſt of the ſeventh month, in remembrance of the ſlaying of Gedaliah, upon which followed the diſperſion of the Jews, of which we have an account, Jer. xlii. 1, 2. And the faſt of the tenth month, in memory of the beginning of the ſiege of Jeruſalem, of which we find mention, 2 Kings xxv. 1.

In this order we find theſe four annual faſts mentioned,

tioned, Zechar. viii. 19. not according to the order of the events, but of the months of the ſeveral years in which theſe events happened: and there likewiſe GOD gives a full anſwer to this enquiry concerning the continuance of theſe annual faſts, namely, that they ſhould for the future be turned into ſolemn days of joy and gladneſs. SERM. XXXIX.

" And the word of the LORD " of hoſts came unto me, ſaying, Thus ſaith the " LORD of hoſts, the faſt of the fourth month, and " the faſt of the fifth, and the faſt of the ſeventh, " and the faſt of the tenth, ſhall be to the houſe of " Judah joy and gladneſs, and cheerful feaſts. Zech. viii. 18, 19.

I return now to the text, " Did ye at all faſt unto " me, even unto me? that is, did theſe faſts truly ſerve to any religious end and purpoſe? Did not the people content themſelves with a mere external ſhew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation of their ſouls, in order to a real repentance? Did they not ſtill go on in their ſins; nay, and add to them upon theſe occaſions, faſting for ſtrife, and debate, and oppreſſion? In a word, were they not worſe rather than better for them? And therefore GOD had no regard to them, as it follows in this chapter; " thus ſpeaketh the LORD of hoſts, " ſaying; Execute judgment, and ſhew mercy and " compaſſion every man to his brother; and oppreſs " not the widows nor the fatherleſs, the ſtranger nor " the poor; and let none of you imagine miſchief " againſt his brother in your heart: but they refuſed " to hearken, and pulled away the ſhoulder, and " ſtopped their ears that they ſhould not hear; yea, " they made their heart as an adamant-ſtone, leſt " they ſhould hear the law and the words which the Verſe. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

" LORD

SERM. XXXIX.

" LORD of hoſts hath ſent by his ſpirit in the former " prophets: therefore came great wrath from the " LORD of hoſts: therefore it is come to paſs, that " as he cried and they would not hear; ſo they cried, " and I would not hear, ſaith the LORD of hoſts."

So that notwithſtanding theſe outward ſolemnities of faſting and prayer, here was nothing of a religious faſt, " Did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?" They were ſenſible of the judgments of GOD which were broken in upon them, but they did not turn from their ſins, but perſiſted ſtill in their obſtinacy and diſobedience.

And what GOD here by the prophet Zechary calls " faſting unto him, even unto him," the prophet Iſaiah calls " the faſt which GOD hath choſen, and " an acceptable day to the LORD. Wherefore have " we faſted, ſay they, and thou ſeeſt not? Where- " fore have we afflicted our ſouls, and thou takeſt " no knowledge? Behold, ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, " and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs: ye ſhall " not faſt as ye do this day, to make your voice to " be heard on high. Is it ſuch a faſt as I have cho- " ſen, a day for a man to afflict his ſoul? Is it to " bow down his head as a bulruſh, and to ſpread ſack- " cloth and aſhes under him? Wilt thou call this a " faſt, and an acceptable day to the LORD? Is it not " to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring " the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe; when thou " ſeeſt the naked that thou cover him, and that thou " hide not thy ſelf from thine own fleſh? Then ſhall " thy light break forth as the morning, and thy ſal- " vation ſhall ſpring forth ſpeedily: then ſhalt thou " call and the LORD ſhall anſwer, &c.

From all which paſſages we may eaſily underſtand wherein theſe monthly faſts of the Jews were defective, and what was the fault that GOD finds with them when he expoſtulates ſo ſeverely in the text: "When ye faſted and mourned in the fifth and ſeventh month, even theſe ſeventy years, did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me? In the general, the fault which GOD finds with them was this, that theſe ſolemnities did not ſerve any real end and purpoſe of religion, but failed in their main deſign, which was, a ſincere repentance and reformation of their lives: for which reaſon he tells them that they were not at all acceptable to him, nor eſteemed by him as performed unto him, becauſe they did not anſwer the true intention and deſign of them. SERM. XXXIX.

My work at this time ſhall be, firſt, to conſider in general what it is to faſt unto GOD, that is, to keep a truly religious faſt. Secondly, to bring the matter nearer to our ſelves, I ſhall conſider more particularly, what the duty of this day, appointed by their majeſties for a ſolemn humiliation and repentance throughout the nation, does require at our hands.

I. I ſhall conſider in general what it is to faſt unto GOD, that is, to keep a truly religious faſt. And of this I ſhall give an account in the following particulars. Firſt, a truly religious faſt conſiſts in the afflicting of our bodies by a ſtrict abſtinence, that ſo they may be fit and proper inſtruments to promote and help forward the grief and trouble of our minds. Secondly, in the humble confeſſion of our ſins to GOD with ſhame and confuſion of face, and with a hearty I.

SERM. XXXIX.

hearty contrition and sorrow for them. Thirdly, in an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to him that he would avert his judgments and turn away his anger from us. Fourthly, in intercession with God for such spiritual and temporal blessings upon our selves and others as are needful and convenient. Fifthly, in alms and charity to the poor, that our humiliation and prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention these particulars, that I may more largely insist upon that which I mainly intended, and proposed to consider in the next place, namely,

II. II. What the duty of this day, appointed by their majesties for a solemn humiliation and repentance throughout the nation, doth require at our hands. And this I shall endeavour to comprize in the following particulars. First, that we should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal sins, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the public guilt, and done his part to bring down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the nation. Secondly, that we should likewise heartily lament and bewail the sins of others; especially the great and crying sins of the nation, committed by all ranks and orders of men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us. Thirdly, we should most importunately deprecate those terrible judgments of God to which these our great and crying sins have so justly exposed us. Fourthly, we should pour out our earnest prayers and supplications to Almighty God for the preservation

SERM. XXXIX.

tion of their majesties sacred persons, and for the establishment and prosperity of their government, and for the good success of their arms and forces by sea and land. Fifthly, our fasting and prayers should be accompanied with our charity and alms to the poor and needy. Lastly, we should prosecute our repentance and good resolutions to the actual reformation and amendment of our lives. Of these I shall, by God's assistance, speak as briefly and as plainly as I can, and so as every one of us may understand what God requires of him upon so solemn an occasion as this.

First, we should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal sins and miscarriages, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publick guilt, and done his part to bring down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the nation. Our humiliation and repentance should begin with our selves and our own sins, because repentance is always designed to end in reformation; but there cannot be a general reformation without the reformation of particular persons which do constitute and make up the generality.

And this Solomon prescribes as the true method of a national reformation, and the proper effect of a publick humiliation and repentance; in that admirable prayer of his at the dedication of the temple: "If there be, says he, in the land famine; if there "be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust; or if there "be caterpillar; or if their enemy besiege them in "the land of their cities: whatever plague, whatever "sickness there be; what prayer and supplication so- "ever be made by any man, or by all thy people "Israel,

1 Kings viii 37, 38, 39, 40.

SERM. XXXIX.

" Iſrael, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE " PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART, and ſpread forth " his hands towards this houſe: then hear thou in " heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, " and give to every man according to his way, whoſe " heart thou knoweſt; for thou, even thou only, " knoweſt the hearts of all the children of men; " that they may fear thee, all the days which they " live in the land which thou gaveſt to their fathers."

You ſee here that in caſe of any publick judgment or calamity the humiliation and repentance of a nation muſt begin with particular perſons: " what " prayer or ſupplication ſoever be made by any man, " or by all thy people Iſrael, WHO SHALL KNOW E- " VERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART: " then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and " forgive. Particular perſons muſt be convinced of their perſonal ſins and tranſgreſſions, before GOD will hear the prayers, and forgive the ſins of a nation.

And becauſe we cannot perform this part of confeſſing and bewailing our own perſonal ſins, and of teſtifying our particular repentance for them, in the publick congregation, any otherwiſe than by joining with them in a general humiliation and repentance; therefore we ſhould do well, on the day before the publick faſt, or at leaſt the morning before we go to the publick aſſembly, to humble our ſelves before GOD in our families, and eſpecially in our cloſets; confeſſing to him, with great ſhame and ſorrow, all the particular ſins and offences, together with the ſeveral aggravations of them, which we have been guilty of againſt the Divine Majeſty, ſo far as we are able to call them particularly to our remembrance;

and

and earnestly to beg of GOD the pardon and forgiveness of them, for his mercies sake in JESUS CHRIST.

And so likewise, after we return from the church, we should retire again into our closets, and there renew our repentance, with most serious and sincere resolutions of reforming in all those particulars which we have confessed and repented of. And if we would have our resolutions to come to any good, we must make them as distinct and particular as we can; and charge it upon our selves, as to such and such sins, for which we have declared our sorrow and repentance, that we will amend and do better for the future.

And we should endeavour also, to fortify these good resolutions, in the best manner we can, by serious consideration, and by solemn promises of better obedience, and of a more conscientious care of our lives and all our actions, for the future: and then, with the greatest earnestness and importunity, we should implore the assistance of GOD's grace and holy spirit to this purpose.

By this means the great end of a solemn fast and humiliation will be in some good measure attained, and not wholly defeated, as for the most part it is, by being huddled up and lost in a confused and general repentance, which commonly ends together with the publick assembly, without any real and permanent effect upon particular persons: perhaps a great part of the congregation may have been in some degree sorry for their sins; but after all no man forsakes them, nor is the better for his sorrow, but leaves that behind him in the church, and carries home with him the same affection for his sins which

SERM. XXXIX.

he had before, and a secret resolution not to leave them.

Thus it was with the people of the Jews. They had their solemn monthly fast, in which they made a great shew of humiliation, "hanging down their "heads like a bulrush for a day, and spreading sack-"cloth and ashes under them:" but there was no inward change of their minds, no real reformation of their lives; and as soon as ever the publick solemnity was over, they turned every one to his former evil course. So GOD complains of them; "I hark-"en'd," says he, "and I heard, but they spake not "aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, "saying, what have I done? but they turned every "one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the "battle. They spake not aright," that is, they did not take the right method for an effectual repentance: they humbled themselves indeed before GOD, and repented at random for the sins of the nation in general, which they were all of them ready enough to acknowledge, and to lay a heavy load of guilt upon the community: but all this while, they never reflected upon themselves in particular; they had no sense, no conviction of their own personal faults and miscarriages, without which there can be no true general repentance: "no man repented him of his wic-"kedness, saying, what have I done?"

Jer. viii. 6.

And as they had no sense of their own particular sins which they had been guilty of, so they had no thought of leaving them; but as soon as ever the public fasting and humiliation was over, they returned to them again with the same eager and furious appetite; "they turned every one to his course,

"as

" as the horſe ruſheth into the battle," that is, without any conſideration, or ſenſe of danger. SERM. XXXIX.

Secondly, we ſhould likewiſe upon this day, heartily lament and bewail the ſins of others; eſpecially the great and crying ſins of the nation commited by all ranks and orders of men amongſt us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty GOD hath been ſo juſtly incenſed againſt us.

This hath been the temper and practice of good men in all ages, to be greatly troubled and afflicted for the ſins of others, as well as for their own; to mourn for them in ſecret, as the prophet Jeremy does for the obſtinacy and impenitency of the Jews, and for the terrible judgments and calamities which their ſins were ready to bring down upon them: " but if ye will not return," ſays he to that obdurate people, " my ſoul ſhall weep in ſecret places " for your pride," or obſtinacy; " and mine " eyes ſhall weep ſore, and run down with tears, " becauſe the LORD's flock is carried away captive." And indeed almoſt the whole prophecy of Jeremy, and his book of Lamentations, are little elſe but a perpetual humiliation and mourning for the ſins of that people, and for the judgments of GOD which he ſaw already inflicted, or foreſaw to be coming upon them. Jer. xiii. 17.

We read likewiſe of Lot, when he dwelt in Sodom, how " he was vexed with the filthy converſation of the wicked: " for that righteous man," ſaith St. Peter, " dwelling among them, in ſeeing " and hearing, vexed his righteous ſoul from day to " day, with their unlawful deeds."

Holy

SERM. XXXIX.

Holy David alſo, upon all occaſions, teſtifies his great trouble and grief for the ſins which he ſaw committed by others, and was ſo affected with them, that he trembled at the very thought of them:

Pſal. cxix. 136. "rivers of tears," ſays he, "run down mine eyes, "becauſe men keep not thy law:" and in the ſame

v. 53. pſalm, "horror hath taken hold of me, becauſe of "the wicked which forſake thy law:" and again,

v. 158. "I beheld the tranſgreſſors and was grieved, becauſe "they kept not thy word."

And how does Daniel humble himſelf before GOD and mourn, and in the name of all the people, and of all degrees and orders of men among them, take ſhame to himſelf and them, for the great ſins which

Dan. ix. 5, 7, 8. they had been guilty of? "We have ſinned, and "have committed iniquity, and have done wicked-"ly: O LORD, righteouſneſs belongeth unto thee, "but unto us confuſion of face, as at this day: to "our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, be-"cauſe we have ſinned againſt thee."

With what trouble and confuſion does Ezra, upon a ſolemn day of faſting and humiliation, acknowledge and bewail the ſins of the people? "O my

Ezr. ix. 6, 7. "GOD," ſays he," "I am aſhamed, and bluſh to "lift up my face to thee my GOD: for our iniqui-"ties are increaſed over our heads, and our treſpaſ-"ſes grown up unto the heavens: ſince the days of "our fathers, we have been in a great treſpaſs unto "this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings "and our prieſts, been delivered into the hands of "the kings of the lands, &c."

And thus alſo ought we, the people of this ſinful land, upon this ſolemn day of faſting and hu-

miliation, to set our sins in order before us, with all their heinous aggravations; and in the bitterness of our souls to lament and bewail that general prevalence of impiety and vice, which hath over-spread the nation, and diffused it self through all ranks and degrees of men, magistrates, ministers, and people. I shall speak something more particularly concerning each of these. SERM. XXXIX.

1. The sins of the magistrates and those that are in authority. They that make laws for others, and are to see to the execution of them, ought to be strict observers of them themselves. For it must needs put a man not a little out of countenance, to be severe upon those faults in others of which he knows himself to be notoriously guilty. And yet how many are there, whose place and duty it is to correct the vices and immoralities of others, who are far from being examples of virtue themselves? And therefore it is no wonder that there is so lame and unequal a distribution of justice in the nation, and that magistrates are so cold and slack in the discountenancing of vice and impiety, and in putting the good and wholesom laws made against them in execution: as against the profanation of the LORD's day by secular business, by vain sports and pastimes, which by the very nature of them are apt to dissolve the minds of men into mirth and pleasure, and to carry them off from all serious thoughts of GOD and religion, and from the meditations of another world; and to give the devil an advantage, and an opportunity, which he never fails to take, to steal the good seed, the word of GOD, which they have heard that day, out of their hearts, and to make it of none

SERM. XXXIX.

none effect: and which is yet worſe, by lewd and ſinful practices, which are unlawful at any time, but upon that day, are a double breach and violation of GOD's law.

And likewiſe by neglecting to put in execution the laws againſt profane ſwearing and curſing, for which the land mourns; and againſt drunkenneſs, and adultery, and fornication, which are ſo common, and ſo impudently committed amongſt us: whether they be civil, or eccleſiaſtical laws; and it is hard to ſay which of them are moſt remiſly executed.

And to mention no more, by neglecting to proſecute that horrible ſin of murther, ſo frequently now committed in our ſtreets beyond the example of former ages, with that ſeverity and impartiality which is neceſſary to free the nation from the guilt of that crying ſin, which calls ſo loud to heaven for vengeance.

And all this, notwithſtanding the magiſtrates are under the oath of GOD to put the laws in due execution againſt all theſe crimes, ſo far as they come to their knowledge, and fall under their cogniſance.

2. The ſins of the miniſters, who ſerve at GOD's altar, and watch over the ſouls of men, whoſe blood will be required at their hands, if any of them periſh through their fault and neglect. There is no reaſon to doubt, but that there is a good number of faithful ſhepherds in the land, who watch over their flocks with great care and conſcience, remembring the dreadful account which they muſt one day make, to "him who ſhall judge the quick and "dead," of the ſouls committed to their charge.

But

SERM. XXXIX.

But yet how groſly do many of us fail of the faithful diſcharge of the ſubſtantial parts of this high office? Wanting a juſt ſenſe of the ineſtimable worth and value of the ſouls of men for whom CHRIST died; taking little or no care to inſtruct them in the good knowledge of the LORD, and to lead them in the way to eternal happineſs by an exemplary converſation.

Nay too many among us demean themſelves ſo ſcandalouſly, as perfectly to undermine the credit and effect of their doctrine by leading lives ſo directly contrary to it; and to alienate their people from the church, and to make them to abhor the ſacrifice and ſervice of the LORD by their wicked and unhallowed converſations: hereby expoſing them to the craft of ſeducers, and rendring them an eaſy prey to the emiſſaries of the church of Rome, or to any other ſect and faction that pretends a greater zeal for religion, or makes a better ſhew of a ſtrict and unblameable life.

For who will regard or believe thoſe teachers, who give all the evidence that can be by their lives and actions, that they do not believe themſelves and their own doctrines? When all is ſaid, the life and manners of the preacher are the beſt eloquence, and have that dint and power of perſuaſion in them, which no words, no art can equal. Who ſo lives as he ſpeaks, does, as it is ſaid of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, "ſpeaks as one that hath authority, and not "as the ſcribes:" not as the ſcribes; whoſe words, notwithſtanding all the formality and gravity with which they were delivered, did therefore want weight and force, becauſe, as our SAVIOUR tells us

SERM. XXXIX.

of them, "they said, but did not;" their lives were not answerable to their doctrines: whereas our blessed SAVIOUR therefore "spoke as never man spake," because he lived as never man lived; so innocent, so useful, so exemplary a life: he "was holy, harmless, and undefiled:" he "did no sin, neither was "guile found in his lips: he fulfilled all righteousness, and went about doing good." This was that which made him so powerful "a preacher of "righteousness;" and we must necessarily fall so much short of him in the authority and efficacy of our sermons, as we do in the holiness and goodness of our lives. Such a preacher, and such a practice as that of our blessed SAVIOUR was, is every way fitted to reprove, and persuade, and reform mankind.

We now live in an age and church, wherein they who are called to be the teachers and guides of souls ought to take great heed both to their doctrine and their lives; that the name of GOD may not be blasphemed, and his holy religion brought into contempt by those, who, above all others, are most nearly concerned to preserve and support the credit and honour of it.

And we cannot but see, how our religion and church are beset and endangered on every side; by the rude assaults of infidelity, and by the cunning arts of seducing spirits, and by our own intestine heats and divisions: and it can never be sufficiently lamented, no though it were with tears of blood, that we whose particular charge and employment it is to build up the souls of men in a holy faith, and in the resolution of a good life, should, for want of due instruction, and by the dissolute and profligate

lives

lives of too many among us, and by inflaming our needleſs differences about leſſer things, have ſo great a hand in pulling down religion, and in betraying the ſouls of men either to downright infidelity, or to a careleſs neglect and profane contempt of all religion.

May not GOD juſtly expoſtulate this matter with us, as he did of old with the people of the Jews; "a wonderful and horrible thing is committed in "the land; the prophets propheſy falſly, and the "prieſts bear rule by their means, and my people "love to have it ſo; and what will ye do in the "end thereof?" When they who are the paſtors and guides of ſouls, have by their ill conduct and management brought matters to that paſs, that the generality of the people ſit down contented with the worſt ſtate of things, and are become almoſt indifferent whether they have any religion or not, what can the end of theſe things be, but that "the kingdom of GOD will be taken from us, and given to "a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it?" Jer. v. 30, 31.

If ever there be a public reformation among us, it muſt begin at the houſe of GOD; and they who are the miniſters of religion muſt lead on this work, and be more careful and conſcientious in the diſcharge of that high and holy office which is committed to them by "the great ſhepherd and biſhop of ſouls." Elſe, what ſhall we ſay when GOD ſhall challenge us, as he once did the paſtors of the Jewiſh church, by his prophet, ſaying, "where is the flock that was "given thee, thy beautiful flock? What wilt thou "ſay when he ſhall puniſh thee? Jer. xiii. 20, 21.

SERM. XXXIX.

3. The ſins of the people; amongſt whom there is almoſt an univerſal corruption and depravation of manners; inſomuch that impiety and vice ſeem to have overſpread the face of the nation; ſo that we may take up that ſad complaint of the prophet concerning the people of Iſrael, and apply it to our ſelves; that we "are a ſinful nation, a people laden "with iniquity, a ſeed of evil doers;" that "the whole "head is ſick, and the whole heart faint; and that "from the ſole of the foot even to the head, there "is no ſoundneſs in us, but wounds, and bruiſes, "and putrifying ſores."

Iſai. i. 4, 5.

We may juſtly ſtand amazed to conſider, how "the GOD of all patience" is provoked by us every day; to think, how long he hath born with us and "ſuffered "our manners;" our open profaneneſs, and infidelity; our great immoralities, and groſs hypocriſy; our inſolent contempt of religion, and our ill-favoured counterfeiting of it for low and ſordid ends: and, which is the moſt melancholy conſideration of all the reſt, we ſeem to be degenerated to that degree, that it is very much to be feared, there is hardly integrity enough left amongſt us to ſave us.

And then if we conſider further our moſt uncharitable and unchriſtian diviſions, to the endangering both of our reformed religion, and of the civil rights and liberties of the nation: our incorrigibleneſs under the judgments of GOD which we have ſeen abroad in the earth, and which have in a very ſevere and terrible manner been inflicted upon theſe kingdoms, that the "inhabitants thereof might learn righteouſ"neſs:" our inſenſibleneſs of the hand of GOD, ſo viſible in his late providences towards us, and in the many

many merciful and wonderful deliverances which from time to time he hath wrought for us..

And lastly, if we reflect upon our horrible ingratitude to GOD our SAVIOUR and mighty deliverer; and to them likewise whom he hath so signally honoured in making them the happy means and instruments of our deliverance: and this, not only expressed by a bold contempt of their authority, but by a most unnatural conspiracy against them with the greatest enemies not only to the peace of the nation, but likewise to the reformed religion therein professed and by law established; and to the interest of it all the world over.

So that we may say with Ezra, "and now, O our "GOD, what shall we say unto thee after this?" And may not GOD likewise say to us, as he did more than once to the Jews? "Shall I not visit for "these things, saith the LORD? and shall not my "soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Ezra ix. 6.

Thirdly, we should likewise, upon this day, earnestly deprecate GOD's displeasure, and make our humble supplications to him, that he would be graciously pleased to avert those terrible judgments which hang over us, and which we have just cause to fear may fall upon us; and that he would be intreated by us at last to be appeased towards us, and to turn from the fierceness of his anger.

This we find the people of GOD were wont to do upon their solemn days of fasting and prayer; and this GOD expressly enjoins: "Blow the trumpet in "Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; ga- "ther the people, sanctify the congregation, assem- "ble the elders, &c. Let the priests, the ministers Joel ii. 15, 16, 17.

SERM. XXXIX.

" of the LORD, weep between the porch and the al-
" ter, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD,
" and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the
" heathen should rule over them: wherefore should
" they say among the people, where is their GOD?"

And to this earnest deprecation of his judgments, GOD promiseth a gracious answer; for so it immediately follows: " then will the LORD be jealous for " his land, and pity his people."

Ver. 18.

And thus likewise Daniel, when he set his face " to seek the LORD GOD, by prayer and supplica-
" tions, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes," does in a most humble and earnest manner deprecate the displeasure of GOD towards his people, and beg of him to remove his judgments, and to turn away his anger from them. " O LORD, according to all thy " righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and " thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, " thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the " iniquity of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people " are become a reproach to all that are about us. " Now therefore, O GOD, hear the prayer of thy " servant and his supplication; and cause thy face " to shine upon thy sanctuary which is desolate, for " the LORD's sake. O my GOD, incline thine ear " and hear, open thine eyes and behold our desola-
" tions, and the city which is called by thy name: " for we do not present our supplications before thee, " for our righteousness, but for thy great mercy: O " LORD hear, O LORD forgive, O LORD hearken " and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my " GOD; for thy city and thy people are called by " thy name."

Dan. ix. 3.

Ver. 16, 17, 18, 19.

And

SERM. XXXIX.

And thus alſo ſhould we, upon this ſolemn occaſion, cry mightily unto GOD, and with the greateſt importunity deprecate thoſe terrible judgments which we ſo righteouſly have deſerved, and to which the great and crying ſins of the whole nation have ſo juſtly expoſed us: humbly beſeeching him, not for our righteouſneſs, but for his great mercy; for his own name's ſake, and becauſe we are his people and are called by his name, and becauſe his holy truth and religion are profeſſed amongſt us; that he would be pleaſed to hear the prayers of his ſervants and their ſupplications which they have made before him this day, "for the LORD's ſake."

Fourthly, we ſhould likewiſe, upon this day, pour out our moſt earneſt ſupplications to Almighty GOD, for the preſervation of their majeſties ſacred perſons, and for the proſperity and eſtabliſhment of their government, and for the good ſucceſs of their arms and forces by ſea and land.

And more eſpecially, ſince his majeſty, with ſo many confederate princes and ſtates of Europe, is engaged in ſo neceſſary an undertaking for the common good of Chriſtendom, and for the mutual preſervation and recovery of their reſpective rights: we ſhould earneſtly implore the favour and aſſiſtance of Almighty GOD in ſo juſt and glorious a cauſe, againſt the common invader and oppreſſor of the rights and liberties of mankind.

And that of his infinite goodneſs he would be graciouſly pleaſed to take the perſon of our ſovereign lord the king into the particular care and protection of his providence: that he would ſecure his precious life from all ſecret attempts, and from open violence:

that

SERM. XXXIX.

that he would give his angels charge over him, and cover his head in the day of battle, and crown it with victory over his enemies, and reſtore him to us again in ſafety.

And that he would likewiſe preſerve and direct the queen's majeſty, in whoſe hands the adminiſtration of the government is at preſent ſo happily placed: that he would give her wiſdom and reſolution for ſuch a time as this, and ſupport and carry her through all the difficulties of it.

And, laſtly, that he would bleſs them both with a long life, and a peaceful and happy reign over us; that "under them we may live quiet and peaceable "lives in all godlineſs and honeſty."

Fifthly, our faſting and humiliation ſhould be accompanied with our alms and charity to the poor and needy: and we ſhould every one of us, according to the counſel given by the prophet to king Nebuchadnezzar, "break off our ſins by righteouſneſs, and "our iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor, if it "may be a lengthning of our tranquillity:" hereby intimating, that if there be any way to prevent or remove the judgments of GOD, and to prolong the tranquillity and happineſs of prince and people, a ſincere repentance, and a great charity to them that are in neceſſity and diſtreſs, are moſt likely to prevail with GOD, not only to reſpite the ruin of a ſinful people, but to incline him to thoughts of peace towards them. For ſo he promiſeth to the Jews upon their ſincere repentance, and earneſt ſupplication to him, which are always accompanied with charity to the poor: "for I know the thoughts which I "think towards you, ſaith the LORD, thoughts of peace,

Dan. iv. 27

Jer. xxix. 11,12,13.

" peace, and not of evil, to give you an expect- SERM. XXIX.
" ed end: then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall
" go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto
" you; and ye shall seek me, and find me, when
" ye shall search for me with all your heart."

And I have often thought that the extraordinary charity of this whole nation, and of our pious princes, who are so ready to every good work, and such bright and shining examples in this kind, more than once so seasonably extended to the relief of our distressed brethren, who fled hither for refuge from the rage and cruelty of their persecutors: I say, I have often thought, that this very thing, next to the infinite mercy and goodness of Almighty God, hath had a very particular influence upon our preservation and deliverance from those terrible calamities which were just ready to rush in upon us. And what cause have we to thank God, who hath allotted to us this more blessed and merciful part, to give and not to receive; to be free from persecution our selves, that so we might be in a capacity to give refuge and relief to them that were persecuted?

There are but few that have the faith to believe it, but certainly charity to the poor is a great security to us in times of evil: so David assures us, speaking of the righteous or charitable man; " he
" shall not," says he, " be afraid in the evil time,
" and in the days of dearth he shall be satisfied."

And so likewise in times of public distress, when we are beset with cruel and powerful enemies, who if God were not on our side would swallow us up, the public charity of a nation hath many times proved it's best safeguard and shield: " it shall fight for
" thee,

SERM. XXXIX.

" thee," ſaith the ſon of Sirach, ſpeaking of the charity of alms, " againſt thine enemy, more than " a mighty ſhield and ſtrong ſpear."

And of this, as I ſaid before, I doubt not but we of this nation, by the great mercy and goodneſs of God to us, have had happy experience in our late wonderful deliverance under the conduct and valour of one of the beſt and braveſt of princes; to whom, by too many among us, the moſt unworthy and unthankful returns have been made for all the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for the many and deſperate hazards to which he hath expoſed himſelf for our ſakes, that ever were made to ſo great and generous a benefactor: to ſo great a benefactor, I ſay, not only to theſe nations, but even to all Europe, in aſſerting and maintaining their liberties againſt the inſolent pride and unjuſt encroachments of one of the greateſt oppreſſors the world hath known for many ages: of whom it may be ſaid as Job doth of the Leviathan, " upon the earth there is not his " like:" I am glad I cannot apply what immediately follows, that " he is made without fear;" but ſurely the next words are appoſite enough, " he be- " holdeth all high things, and is king of all the " children of pride:" and yet " he that is higher " than the higheſt," even " he that ſitteth in the " heavens doth laugh at him, for he ſeeth that his " day is coming."

Job xli. 33, 34.

To conclude this particular; if we would have our prayers aſcend up to heaven, and find acceptance there, our alms muſt go along with them: ſo the angel intimates when he ſays to Cornelius, " thy " prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial " before

Acts x. 4.

" before GOD :" thy prayers and thine alms; they must go together if we desire that our prayers should be effectual. And the prophet Isaiah, speaking of the " fast which GOD hath chosen," and which is acceptable to him, makes charity and alms a most essential part of it: " is it not," says he, " to deal " thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring " the poor that are cast out of thy house; when " thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and " that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh? " Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; " thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am." SERM. XXXIX. Isa. lviii. 7, 9.

Sixthly and lastly, we should prosecute our repentance and good resolutions to the actual reformation and amendment of our lives. For in this repentance doth mainly consist: this is the proper fruit and effect of all our humiliation and good resolutions, to forsake our sins, and to become better for the future; more pious and devout towards GOD, more sober and chaste with regard to our selves, more just and charitable, more humble and meek towards all men: in a word, more innocent, more useful, and more " holy in all manner of conversation."

And without this, all our fasting and humiliation, our most earnest prayers and supplications, will signify nothing: all our sorrow and tears will be but as water spilt upon the ground, and will not turn to any account either to save our own souls, or to preserve " this untoward generation, this crooked and " perverse nation," from ruin and destruction. So GOD tells Solomon, that this is the only way to appease and reconcile him to a sinful people: " if " my people which is called by my name shall hum- 2 Chron. vii. 14.

SERM. XXXIX.

" ble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and " turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear in " heaven, and forgive their sin, and heal their land."

And if this were the happy effect of our prayers and humiliation this day, to " turn us from our " wicked ways;" GOD would then turn away his anger from us; and, as he promised to the Jews by the prophet Zachary, he would turn these our monthly fasts " into joy, and gladness, and cheerful feasts;" as he hath in a great measure already done, " bless" ed be his great and glorious name."

Zech. viii. 19.

But if we will not hearken and obey, can we expect that GOD should deliver us from the hands of our enemies, that we may sin against him without fear all the days of our lives? To what purpose should the providence of GOD take so much care to preserve our religion to us, when we make no better use of it for the direction and government of our lives? When it serves most of us, only to talk of it; and too many amongst us, to talk against it; to deride it, and despitefully to use it. If this be the truth of our case, what can we say, why the kingdom of GOD should not be taken from us and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it? What can we say, why our candlestick should not be removed, and the light of the glorious gospel of CHRIST which we have so long enjoyed, and so long rebelled against, should not be utterly extinguished amongst us?

And if I cannot prevail with you to come to these good resolutions, and to make them good: if you will not be persuaded to practise, yet be pleased to attend to what we say: hear our words at least, if

ye

ye will not do them. This the people of the Jews would do, when they were at the worſt: So GOD tells the prophet concerning them: "they come "unto thee, as the people cometh; and they ſit "before thee, as my people; and they hear thy "words, but they will not do them." SERM. XXXIX. Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

I had much rather at any time have occaſion to praiſe than to reprove, eſpecially in this great aſſembly: and yet it is not to be diſſembled, that the behaviour of too many in this place is frequently ſo careleſs and irreverent, as is very miſ-becoming thoſe who are in the more peculiar preſence of the great and glorious "majeſty of heaven and earth," and profeſs at that very time to worſhip him.

I am ſure, we have a better pattern perpetually before us; of a decent and unaffected devotion, of a moſt ſerious and ſteady attention, without wandring, without diverſion, and without drowſineſs: ſuch an example as I cannot but hope will in a ſhort time gain upon us all, and by a more gentle and ſilent reproof win us to the imitation of it.

And if we could but be prevailed upon to demean our ſelves with that reverence, and to hear with that attention, which becomes the worſhip and the word of GOD, it might then be hoped that we would conſider what is ſaid; and conſideration would probably work conviction, and conviction bring us to a better mind, and to a firm purpoſe of doing what we are inwardly convinced is both our duty and our intereſt to do.

Let us then go away from this ſolemnity, with a reſolution to do every one what we ought; truly and earneſtly to repent us of our ſins paſt, and to lead

SERM. XXXIX.

lead a new life for the future; to fear that great and terrible GOD, in whose presence we have humbled our selves this day; and to "turn to him that hath "smitten us," lest we provoke him "to punish us "yet seven times more," and after that "seven times "more for our sins," and for our impenitency in them, till at last "he make our plagues wonderful."

To conclude; let us every one, with that true penitent in Job, take words to our selves, and say, "surely it is meet to be said unto GOD, I have born "chastisement, I will not offend any more; that "which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have "done iniquity, I will do no more. Oh! that "there were such a heart in us, that it might be "well with us, and with our children for ever."

Which GOD of his infinite goodness grant, for his mercies sake in JESUS CHRIST: to whom with thee, O Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, both now and ever, Amen.

SER-

SERMON XL.

That GOD is the only happineſs of man.

Preached before the Queen at Whitehall, March 20, 1691-2.

PSALM lxxiii. 25.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee.

THE deſign of this pſalm is to vindicate the goodneſs and juſtice of the divine providence, notwithſtanding the proſperous ſtate of the wicked and the afflicted condition of good men many times in this world. And in the firſt place, the pſalmiſt, whoever he was, whether David or Aſaph, lays down this for a moſt certain truth, that GOD is good to good men: "of a truth GOD is good to Iſrael, Ver. 1. "to ſuch as are of a clean heart." SERM. XL.

And yet for all this he tells us, that at ſome times he was under no ſmall temptation to queſtion the truth of this principle, when he beheld the promiſcuous diſpenſation of things here below; that the wicked are often proſperous, and good men expoſed to great calamities in this life; as if GOD either neglected human affairs, or had a greater kindneſs for the workers of iniquity than for pious and good men: "as for me, my foot had well-nigh ſlipped, Ver. 2.

SERM. XL.

" for I was envious at the fooliſh, when I ſaw the " proſperity of the wicked."

This, he ſays, was a very great ſtumbling-block to good men, and tempted them to doubt of the pro-

Ver. 10. vidence of GOD: " therefore his people return hi- " ther, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to " them; and they ſay, doth GOD know, and is there " knowledge in the moſt High?" This ſentence is ſomewhat obſcurely rendered in our tranſlation, ſo as to make the ſenſe of it difficult; which is plainly this: " therefore his people return hither;" that is, therefore good men come to this, in the greatneſs of their affliction, and in the bitterneſs of their ſoul, to queſtion GOD's knowledge and care of human affairs.

Ver. 12. " Behold," ſay they, " theſe are the ungodly, " and yet they are the proſperous in the world, they " increaſe in riches:" to what purpoſe then is it for

Ver. 13. any man to be religious and virtuous? " Verily, I " have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my " hands in innocency:" in vain have I endeavoured after purity of heart and innocency of life, ſince ſo little good comes of it; nay, ſo far from that, that

Ver. 14. I have been in continual trouble and affliction: " all " the day long have I been plagued, and chaſtned " every morning."

Such thoughts as theſe often came into his mind, and gave him great trouble and diſquiet: but he pre-

Ver. 15. ſently corrects himſelf: if I ſay I will ſpeak thus, I " ſhould offend againſt the generation of thy chil- " dren;" that is, I ſhould go againſt the ſenſe of all pious and good men, who have always believed the providence of GOD notwithſtanding this objection: which at laſt he tells us he had raiſed on purpoſe to

try

try if he could find the solution of it; "I thought "to know this, which was grievous in mine eyes:" and then he resolves all into the unsearchable wisdom of the divine providence, which if we fully understood from first to last, we should see good reason to be satisfied with the equity of it: "when I go "into the sanctuary of GOD, then shall I understand "the end of these men? How thou didst set them "in slippery places, &c." This satisfied him, that whenever the secret design of GOD's providence should be unfolded, whether in this world or the other, how strange and cross soever things might seem to be at present, yet in the issue and conclusion it would appear, that neither are bad men so happy, nor good men so miserable, as at present they may seem to be. SERM. XL. Ver. 16 Ver. 17, 18.

So that upon a full debate of this matter, the psalmist concludes, that these objections against providence do spring from our ignorance, and short and imperfect view of things; whereas if we saw the whole design from beginning to end, it would appear to be very reasonable and regular. "Thus my "heart was grieved; so foolish was I and ignorant, "and as a beast before thee." And in regard to himself, he tells us, that he saw great reason to acknowledge GOD's tender care over him in particular, and that he could find no security or comfort for himself, but in GOD alone: "Nevertheless I am conti- "nually with thee; thou hast holden me up by thy "right hand: thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, "and afterwards receive me to glory;" as if he had said, I am sensible of thy constant presence with me, and care of me; and do intirely depend upon thy Ver. 21. Ver. 23.

SERM. XL.

guidance and direction, not doubting but that my preſent troubles and afflictions will have a happy and glorious iſſue.

And at laſt he breaks out into a kind of exultation and triumph for the mighty conſolation which he found in the firm belief of the being and providence of GOD, as the great ſtay and ſupport of his ſoul in the worſt condition that could befal him; in the words of the text, "whom have I in heaven but "thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire "beſides thee." If a man were to chuſe a happineſs for himſelf, and were to ranſack heaven and earth for it, after all his ſearch and enquiry he would at laſt fix upon GOD as the chief happineſs of man, and the true and only reſt and center of our ſouls. This then is the plain meaning of the text, "that "nothing in the world but GOD can make man "happy: whom have I in heaven but thee? and "there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides "thee."

That man of himſelf is not ſufficient for his own happineſs, is evident upon many accounts: becauſe he is liable to ſo many evils and calamities, which he can neither prevent, nor remedy: he is full of wants which he cannot ſupply; compaſſed about with infirmities which he can only complain of, but is not able to redreſs: he is obnoxious to dangers which he muſt always fear, becauſe he can never ſufficiently provide againſt them.

Conſider man by himſelf, and from under the conduct and protection of a ſuperior and more powerful being, and he is in a moſt diſconſolate and forlorn condition: ſecure of nothing that he enjoys, and liable

able to be diſappointed of every thing that he hopes for: he is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and perhaps the juſteſt cauſe of his grief is that he cannot help it; for if he could, inſtead of grieving for it, he would help it: he cannot refrain from deſiring a great many things which he would fain have, but is never likely to obtain, becauſe they are out of his power; and it troubles him both that they are ſo, and that he cannot help his being troubled at it.

" Thus man walketh in a vain ſhew, and diſquiet-" eth himſelf in vain;" courting happineſs in a thouſand ſhapes, and the faſter he follows it, the ſwifter it flies from him. Almoſt every thing promiſeth happineſs to us at a diſtance, ſuch a ſtep of honour, ſuch a pitch of eſtate, ſuch a fortune or match for a child: but when we come nearer to it, either we fall ſhort of it, or it falls ſhort of our expectation; and it is hard to ſay which of theſe is the greateſt diſappointment. Our hopes are uſually bigger than enjoyment can ſatisfy, and an evil long feared, beſides that it may never come, is many times more painful and troubleſom than the evil it ſelf when it comes.

" In a word, man is born to trouble as the ſparks " fly upwards." He comes into the world naked and unarmed, and from himſelf more deſtitute of the natural means of his ſecurity and ſupport than any other creature whatſoever, as it were on purpoſe to ſhew that he is more peculiarly the care of a ſuperior providence: and as man, of all the creatures of this lower world, is only made to own and acknowledge a deity; ſo GOD in great wiſdom hath ſo ordered things, that none of the other creatures

SERM. XL.

ſhould have ſo much need of him, and ſo much reaſon to acknowledge their neceſſary dependance upon him. So that the words of David are the very ſenſe and voice of nature, declaring to us that mankind is born into the world upon terms of greater dependance upon the providence of GOD than other creatures: "thou art he," ſays David there to GOD, "that tookeſt me out of the womb, thou "madeſt me to hope," or thou didſt keep me in ſafety, "when I was upon my mother's breaſts: I "was caſt upon thee from the womb, thou art my "GOD from my mother's belly: be not far from me, "for trouble is near:" trouble is always near to us, and therefore it is happy for us that GOD is never far from any of us: "for in him we live, and move, "and have our being."

Pſal. xxii. 9, 10, 11.

And when we are grown up, we are liable to a great many miſchiefs and dangers, every moment of our lives; and, without the providence of GOD, continually inſecure not only of the good things of this life, but even of life it ſelf: ſo that when we come to be men, we cannot but wonder however we arrived at that ſtate, and how we have continued in it ſo long, conſidering the infinite difficulties and dangers which have continually attended us: that in running the gantlope of a long life, when ſo many hands have been lifted up againſt us, and ſo many ſtrokes levelled at us, we have eſcaped ſo free, and with ſo few marks and ſcars upon us: that when we are beſieged with ſo many dangers, and ſo many arrows of death are perpetually flying about us, to which we do ſo many ways lie open, we ſhould yet hold out twenty, forty, ſixty years, and ſome of us perhaps

perhaps longer, and do ſtill ſtand at the mark untouched, at leaſt not dangerouſly wounded by any of them: and conſidering likewiſe this fearful and wonderful frame of a human body, this infinitely complicated engine; in which, to the due performance of the ſeveral functions and offices of life, ſo many ſtrings and ſprings, ſo many receptacles and channels are neceſſary, and all in their right frame and order; and in which, beſides the infinite imperceptible and ſecret ways of mortality, there are ſo many ſluices and flood-gates to let death in and life out, that it is next to a miracle, though we take but little notice of it, that every one of us did not die every day ſince we were born: I ſay conſidering the nice and curious frame of our bodies, and the innumerable contingencies and hazards of human life, which is ſet in ſo ſlippery a place, that we ſtill continue in the land of the living, we cannot aſcribe to any thing but the watchful providence of Almighty GOD, "who holds "our ſoul in life, and ſuffers not our foot to be "moved." SERM. XL.

To the ſame merciful providence of GOD we owe, that whilſt we continue in life we have any comfortable poſſeſſion and enjoyment of our ſelves and of that which makes us men, I mean our reaſon and underſtanding: that our imagination is not let looſe upon us, to haunt and torment us with melancholick freaks and fears: that we are not delivered up to the horrors of a gloomy and guilty mind: that every day we do not fall into frenzy and diſtraction, which next to wickedneſs and vice is the ſoreſt calamity, and ſaddeſt diſguiſe of human nature: I ſay, next to wickedneſs and vice, which is a wilful fren-

SERM. XL.

zy, a madneſs not from misfortune but from choice; whereas the other proceeds from natural and neceſſary cauſes, ſuch as are in a great meaſure out of our power; ſo that we are perpetually liable to it, from any ſecret and ſudden diſorder of the brain, from the violence of a diſeaſe, or the vehement tranſport of any paſſion.

Now if things were under no government, what could hinder ſo many probable evils from breaking in upon us, and from treading upon the heels of one another? Like the calamities of Job, when "the "hedge, which GOD had ſet about him and all that "he had, was broken down and removed."

So that if there were no GOD to take care of us, we could be ſecure of no ſort, no degree of happineſs in this world; no not for one moment: and there would be no other world for us to be happy in, and to make amends to us for all the fears and dangers, all the troubles and calamities of this preſent life: for GOD and another world ſtand and fall together: without him there can be no life after this; and if our hopes of happineſs were only in this life, man of all other beings in this lower world would certainly be the moſt miſerable.

I cannot ſay that all the evils which I have mentioned would happen to all, if the providence of GOD did not rule the world; but that every man would be in danger of them all, and have nothing to ſupport and comfort him againſt the fear of that danger. For the nature of man, conſidered by it ſelf, is plainly inſufficient for it's own happineſs; ſo that we muſt neceſſarily look abroad, and ſeek for it ſomewhere elſe: and who can ſhew us that

good

good that is equal to all the wants and necessities, all the capacities and desires, all the fears and hopes of human nature? Whatsoever can answer all these, must have these following properties: SERM. XL.

First, it must be an all-sufficient good.
Secondly, it must be perfect goodness.
Thirdly, it must be firm and unchangeable in it self.
Fourthly, it must be such a good as none can deprive us of, and take away from us.
Fifthly, it must be eternal.
Sixthly, it must be able to support and comfort us in every condition, and under all the accidents and adversities of human life.
Lastly, it must be such a good as can give perfect rest and tranquillity to our minds.

Nothing that is short of all this can make us happy: and no creature, no not the whole creation, can pretend to be all this to us. All these properties meet only in GOD, who is the perfect and supreme good; as I shall endeavour, in the following discourse, more particularly to shew; and consequently, "that GOD is the only happiness of man."

I. First, GOD is an all-sufficient good. And this does import two things; wisdom to contrive our happiness, and power to effect it; for neither of these without the other is sufficient, and both these in the highest and most eminent degree are in GOD.

He is infinitely wise to design and contrive our happiness; because he knows what happiness is, and how

SERM. XL.

how to frame us ſo as to be capable of the happineſs he deſigns for us; and how to order and diſpoſe all other things ſo, as that they ſhall be no hindrance and impediment to it.

He perfectly underſtands all the poſſibilities of things, and how to fit means to any end. He knows all our wants, and how to ſupply them; all our hopes and deſires, and how to ſatisfy them: he foreſees all the dangers and evils which threaten us, and knows how to prevent or divert them, if he thinks fit; or if he permit them to come, how to ſupport us under them, or to deliver us out of them, or to turn them to our greater benefit and advantage in the laſt iſſue and reſult of things.

His wiſdom cannot be ſurpriſed by any accident which he did not foreſee, and which he is not ſufficiently provided againſt. The wiſdom of men is but ſhort and imperfect, and liable to infinite errors and miſtakes: in many caſes men know not what is ſafeſt and beſt for them, nor whether this or that will conduce moſt to their happineſs: nay it often happens that thoſe very means which the wiſeſt men chuſe for their ſecurity do prove the occaſions of their ruin, and they are thrown down by thoſe very ways whereby they thought raiſe and eſtabliſh themſelves.

Eſpecially if GOD breathe upon the counſels of men, how are their deſigns blaſted? How are they infatuated and foiled in their deepeſt contrivances, and "ſnared in the work of their own hands?" when "it is of the LORD;" the wiſdom of the greateſt politicians is turned into fooliſhneſs: "for there "is no wiſdom, nor underſtanding, nor counſel "againſt the LORD."

But

SERM. XL.

But the divine wisdom, being founded upon infinite knowledge, is thereby secured against all possibility of error and mistake. GOD perfectly knows the natures and the powers of all his creatures, and therefore can never be mistaken in the use and application of them to any of his purposes: so that none of his designs of love and mercy to the sons of men can miscarry for want of good contrivance, or wise conduct.

And as he is perfectly wise to contrive our happiness, so is he infinitely powerful to effect it, and to remove out of the way all the obstacles and impediments of it. We may understand many times what would conduce to our happiness, but may not be able to compass it; but nothing is out of the reach of omnipotency: many things are difficult to us, but nothing is too hard for GOD: many things are impossible with us, but "with GOD all things "are possible." For he is the fountain and original of all power, from whom it is derived, and upon whom it depends, and to whom it is perfectly subject and subordinate: he can do all things at once, and in an instant, and with the greatest ease; and no created power can put any difficulty in his way, much less make any effectual resistance; because omnipotency can check, and countermand, and bear down before it all other powers.

So that if GOD be on our side, who can be against us? We may safely "commit our souls into his "hands, for he is able to keep that which is com-"mitted to him." He can give us all good things, and deliver us from all evil, for "his is the king-"dom and the glorious power." Though all creatures

3.

SERM. XL.

ſhould fail us, we may rely upon GOD, and live upon his all-ſufficiency for our ſupply; and may ſay with the prophet, "though the fig-tree ſhould not "bloſſom, neither fruit be in the vine; though the "labour of the olive ſhould fail, and the fields "ſhould yield no meat; though the flock ſhould "be cut off from the fold, and there ſhould be no "herd in the ſtalls; yet would I rejoice in the "LORD, and joy in the GOD of my ſalvation."

II. Secondly, as GOD is an all-ſufficient good, ſo he is perfect goodneſs. He is willing to communicate happineſs to us, and to employ his power and wiſdom for our good. He made us that he might make us happy, and nothing can hinder us from being ſo but our ſelves. Such is his goodneſs, that "he would have "all men to be ſaved, and to come to the know-"ledge of the truth:" and when we have provoked him by our ſins, "he is long-ſuffering to us-ward, "not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all "ſhould come to repentance:" for "he delight-"eth not in the death of a ſinner, but rather that "he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live." So that if any of us be miſerable, it is our own choice; if we periſh, our deſtruction is of our ſelves: for as the wiſeman, in one of the Apocryphal books, ſays excellently, "GOD made not death, neither hath he "pleaſure in the deſtruction of the living: but men "ſeek death in the error of their life, and pull de-"ſtruction upon themſelves, with the works of their "own hands."

So great is the goodneſs of GOD to mankind, that he hath omitted nothing that is neceſſary to our happineſs.

pineſs. He deſigned it for us at firſt, and to that end he hath endowed us with powers and faculties whereby we are capable of knowing, and loving, and obeying, and enjoying him the chief good. And when we had forfeited all this by the wilful tranſgreſſion and diſobedience of the firſt parents of mankind, and were miſerably bruiſed and maimed by their fall, GOD of his infinite mercy was pleaſed to reſtore us to a new capacity of happineſs, by ſending his only ſon to ſuffer in our nature, and in our ſtead; and thereby to become "a propitiation for "the ſins of the whole world," and "the author "of eternal ſalvation to them that believe and obey "him." And he hath likewiſe promiſed to give us his holy Spirit, to enable us to that faith and obedience which the goſpel requires of us, as the neceſſary conditions of our eternal ſalvation. SERM. XL.

III. Thirdly, GOD is alſo a firm and unchangeable good. Notwithſtanding his infinite wiſdom, and power, and goodneſs, we might be miſerable if GOD were mutable. For that cannot be a happineſs which depends upon uncertainties, and perhaps one of the greateſt aggravations of miſery is to fall from happineſs, to have been once happy, and afterwards to ceaſe to be ſo: and that would unavoidably happen to us, if the cauſe of our happineſs could change, and the foundation of it be removed. If GOD could be otherwiſe than powerful, and wiſe, and good, all our hopes of happineſs would be ſhaken, and would fall to the ground. But the divine nature is not ſubject to any change: as he is "the father of "lights," and "the author of every good and per-

SERM. XL.

" fect gift," ſo " with him is no variableneſs, nei-
" ther ſhadow of turning." All the things of this world are mutable, and for that reaſon, had they no other imperfection belonging to them, cannot make us happy.

IV. Fourthly GOD is ſuch a good as none can deprive us of and take away from us. If the things of this world were unchangeable in their nature, and not liable to any decay, yet they cannot make us happy; becauſe we may be cheated of them by fraud, or robbed of them by violence; but GOD cannot be taken from us. Nothing but our ſins can part GOD and us: " who ſhall ſeparate us," ſaith the apoſtle, " from the love of GOD? ſhall tribulation, or diſ-
" ſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs,
" or peril, or ſword?" We may be ſtripped of all our worldly comforts and enjoyments, by the violence of men; but none of all theſe can ſeparate us from GOD; " I am perſuaded," as the apoſtle goes on with great triumph, " that neither death, nor
" life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers;
" nor height, nor depth, nor things preſent, nor
" things to come, nor any other creature, ſhall be
" able to ſeparate us from the love of GOD which is
" in CHRIST JESUS, our LORD. Nor any other
" creature:" here is a ſufficient induction of particulars, and nothing left out of this catalogue but one, and that is ſin, which is none of GOD's creatures, but our own: this indeed deliberately conſented to, and wilfully continued in, will finally part GOD and us, and for ever hinder us from being happy.

Rom. viii. 35.

v. 38, 39.

But

But if we be careful to avoid this, which only can ſeparate between GOD and us, nothing can deprive us of him; the aids and influences of his grace none can intercept or hinder: the joys and comforts of his holy Spirit none can take from us: all other things may leave us and forſake us: we may be debarred of our beſt friends, and baniſhed from all our acquaintance; but men can ſend us no whither from the preſence of GOD: our communication with heaven cannot be prevented or interrupted. Our prayers and our ſouls will always find the way thither from the uttermoſt parts of the earth.

V. Fifthly, GOD is an eternal good: and nothing but what is ſo can make us happy. Man having an immortal ſpirit, and being deſigned for an endleſs duration, muſt have a happineſs proportionable: for which reaſon nothing in this world can make us happy, becauſe we ſhall abide and remain after it: when a very few years are paſt and gone, and much ſooner for any thing we know, all the things of this world will leave us, or elſe we ſhall be taken away from them, "but GOD is from everlaſting to ever-"laſting: he is the ſame, and his years fail not:" therefore well might David fix his happineſs upon GOD alone, and ſay, "Whom have I in heaven but "thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire "beſides thee: when my heart faileth, and my "ſtrength faileth, GOD is the ſtrength of my heart, "and my portion for ever."

VI. Sixthly, GOD is able to ſupport and comfort us, in every condition, and under all the accidents and adverſities

adverſities of human life. Outward afflictions may hurt our body, but they cannot reach our ſoul; and ſo long as that remains unwounded, "the ſpirit of "a man can bear his infirmities." GOD is intimate to our ſouls, and hath ſecret ways whereby to convey the joys and comforts of his holy Spirit into our hearts, under the bittereſt afflictions and ſharpeſt ſufferings: he can enable us by his grace "to poſſeſs "our ſouls in patience," when all other things are taken from us: when there is nothing but trouble about us, he can "give us peace and joy in believ-"ing:" when we are perſecuted, afflicted, and tormented, he can give us that raviſhing ſight of the glories of another world, that ſtedfaſt aſſurance of a future bleſſedneſs, as ſhall quite extinguiſh all ſenſe of preſent ſufferings: how did many of the primitive Chriſtian martyrs, in the midſt of their torments, and under the very pangs of death "rejoice "in the hope of the glory of GOD?

There are none of us but may happen to fall into thoſe circumſtances of danger, and of bodily pains and ſufferings, as to have no hopes of relief and comfort but from GOD; none in all the world to truſt to but him only: and in the greateſt evils that can befal us in this life, he is a ſure refuge and ſanctuary; and to repeat the words of the pſalmiſt after the text, "when our heart fails, and our ſtrength fails, "GOD is the ſtrength of our hearts, and our portion for ever."

Now what would any of us do in ſuch a caſe, if it were not for GOD? Human nature is liable to deſperate ſtraits and exigencies: and he is not happy who is not provided againſt the worſt that may happen.

pen. It is ſad to be reduced to ſuch a condition, as to be deſtitute of all comfort and hope: and yet men may be brought to that extremity, that if it were not for GOD they would not know which way to turn themſelves, or how to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable conſideration under their preſent anguiſh. SERM. XL.

All men naturally reſort to GOD in extremity, and cry out to him for help: even the moſt profane and atheiſtical, when they are deſtitute of all other comfort, will run to GOD, and take hold of him, and cling about him. But "GOD hath no pleaſure in "fools;" in thoſe who neglect and deſpiſe him in their proſperity, though they owe that alſo entirely to him; but when the evil day comes, then they lay hold of him as their only refuge: when all things go well with them, "GOD is not in all their thoughts; "but in their affliction they will ſeek him early: "then they will cry, LORD, LORD; but he will ſay "to them in that day, depart from me, ye workers "of iniquity, for I know you not."

Here will be the great unhappineſs of ſuch perſons, that GOD will then appear terrible to them, ſo as they ſhall not be able, when they look up to him, to abide his frowns: and at the ſame time that they are forced to acknowledge him, and to ſupplicate to him for mercy and forgiveneſs, they ſhall be ready to deſpair of it: then, thoſe terrible threatnings of GOD's word will come to their minds; "becauſe I called, and "ye refuſed; I ſtretched out my hand, and no man "regarded: but ye ſet at nought all my counſel, "and would have none of my reproof; I alſo will "laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; Prov. i. 24, 25, &c.

SERM. XL.

" cometh; when your fear cometh as deſolation,
" and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when
" diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon you: then ſhall
" they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall
" ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me: for
" that they hated knowledge, and did not chuſe the
" fear of the LORD: they would none of my coun-
" ſel, they deſpiſed all my reproof: therefore ſhall
" they eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled
" with their own devices: the eaſe of the ſimple
" ſhall ſlay them, and the proſperity of fools ſhall
" deſtroy them." To which I will add that ter-
rible paſſage in the prophet, concerning the per-
Iſa. xxvii. 11. verſe and obſtinate Jews, " they are a people of no
" underſtanding, therefore he that made them will
" not have mercy on them, and he that formed
" them will ſhew them no favour." And men are
miſerable creatures indeed, when GOD their maker
doth abandon them, and hath ſo far hardened his
heart againſt them, that he can have no pity and
compaſſion for them.

VII. Seventhly and laſtly, which is conſequent upon all the reſt, GOD is ſuch a good as can give perfect reſt and tranquillity to our minds. And that which cannot do this, though it had all the properties before mentioned, cannot make us happy. For he is not happy who does not think himſelf ſo, whatever cauſe he may have to think ſo. Now what in reaſon can give us diſquiet, if we do firmly believe that there is a GOD, and that his providence rules and governs all things for the beſt; and that GOD is all that to good men which hath now been ſaid of him?

Why

SERM. XL.

Why should not our minds be in perfect repose, when we are secure of the chief good, and have found out that which can make us happy, and is willing to make us so, if we be not wanting to our selves, and by our wilful obstinacy and rebellion against him do not oppose and frustrate this design?

If a considerate man were permitted to his own choice, to wish the greatest good to himself that he could possibly devise; after he had searched heaven and earth, the result of all his wishes would be that there were just such a being as we must necessarily conceive GOD to be: nor would he chuse any other friend or benefactor; any other protector for himself or governor for the whole world, than infinite power conducted and managed by infinite wisdom and goodness; which is the true notion of a GOD: after all his enquiry he would come to the psalmist's conclusion here in the text, "whom have I in heaven "but thee? and there is none upon earth that I de-"sire besides thee."

Vain man is apt to seek for happiness elsewhere, but this proceeds from want of due consideration: for when all things are well weighed, and all accounts rightly cast up and adjusted, we shall at last settle in David's resolution of that great question, "what "is the chief good of man? There may be many," says he, "that say, who will shew us any good?" that is, men are generally inquisitive after happiness, but greatly divided in their opinions about it: most men place it in the present enjoyments of this world, but David for his part pitches upon GOD, in whom he was fully convinced that the happiness of man does consist: "there be many that say, who will Psal. iv. 6, 7, 8.

SERM. XL.

" ſhew us any good? LORD lift thou up the light " of thy countenance upon us: thou haſt put glad- " neſs in my heart, more than in the time that their " corn and wine increaſed." The great joy of the men of this world is in a plentiful harveſt, and the abundance of the good things of this life: but David had found that which gave more joy and gladneſs to his heart, the favour of GOD and the " light of " his countenance:" this gave perfect reſt and tranquillity to his mind, ſo that he needed not to enquire any further: for ſo it follows in the next words, " I will both lay me down in peace, and reſt; for " thou, LORD, only makeſt me to dwell in ſafety:" the Hebrew word ſignifies confidence or ſecurity: here, and no-where elſe, his mind found reſt, and was in perfect eaſe and ſecurity.

I ſhall now only make two or three inferences from this diſcourſe, and ſo conclude.

Firſt, this plainly ſhews us the great unreaſonableneſs and folly of atheiſm, which would baniſh the belief of GOD and his providence out of the world: which, as it is moſt impious in reſpect of GOD, ſo is it moſt malicious to men; becauſe it ſtrikes at the very foundation of our happineſs, and perfectly undermines it. For if there were no GOD, man would evidently be the moſt unhappy of all other beings here below; becauſe his unhappineſs would be laid in the very frame of his nature, in that which diſtinguiſhes him from all other beings below him, I mean in his reaſon and underſtanding: and he would be ſo much more miſerable than the beaſts, by how much he hath a farther reach, and a larger proſpect of future evils; a quicker apprehenſion, and a deeper and more laſting reſentment of them. So

So that if any man could ſee reaſon to ſtagger his belief of a GOD, or of his providence, as I am ſure there is infinite reaſon to the contrary; yet the belief of theſe things is ſo much for the intereſt, and comfort, and happineſs of mankind, that a wiſe man would be heartily troubled to part with a principle ſo favourable to his quiet, and that does ſo exactly anſwer all the natural deſires and hopes and fears of men, and is ſo equally calculated both for our comfort in this world, and for our happineſs in the other. For when a man's thoughts have ranged and wandered as far as they can, his mind can find no reſt, no probable foundation of happineſs but GOD only; no other reaſonable, no nor tolerable hypotheſis and ſcheme of things for a wiſe man to rely upon, and to live and die by. For no other principle but this, firmly believed, and truly lived up to by an anſwerable practice, was ever able to ſupport the generality of mankind, and to miniſter true conſolation to them under the calamities of life, and the pangs of death.

And if there were not ſomething real in the principles of religion, it is impoſſible that they ſhould have ſo remarkable and ſo regular an effect to ſupport our minds in every condition, upon ſo great a number of perſons of different degrees of underſtanding, of all ranks and conditions, young and old, learned and unlearned, in ſo many diſtant places, and in all ages of the world, the records whereof are come down to us: I ſay ſo real, and ſo frequent, and ſo regular an effect as this is, cannot with any colour of reaſon be aſcribed either to blind chance, or mere imagination, but muſt have a real, and re-

SERM. XL.

gular, and uniform cauſe, proportionable to ſo great and general an effect.

I remember that Grotius, in his excellent book of the truth of the chriſtian religion, hath this obſervation, that GOD did not intend that the principles of religion ſhould have the utmoſt evidence that any thing is capable of, and ſuch as is ſufficient to anſwer and bear down all ſorts of captious cavils and objections againſt it; but ſo much as is abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfy a ſober and impartial enquirer after truth, one that hath no other intereſt but to find out truth; and when he hath found it, to yield to it: if it were otherwiſe, and the principles of religion were as glaring and evident as the ſun ſhining at noon-day, as there could hardly be any virtue in ſuch a faith, ſo infidelity would be next to an impoſſibility.

All that I would expect from any man, that ſhall ſay that he cannot ſee ſufficient reaſon to believe the being and the providence of GOD, is this; that he would offer ſome other principles; that he would advance any other hypotheſis and ſcheme of things, that is more agreeable to the common and natural notions of men, and to all appearances of things in the world; and that does bid more fairly for the comfort and happineſs of mankind, than theſe principles of the being of a GOD, and of his watchful providence over the children of men, do plainly do: and till this be clearly done, the principles of religion which have generally been received by mankind, and have obtained in the world in all ages, cannot fairly be diſcarded, and ought not to be diſturbed and put out of poſſeſſion. And this, I think,

think, puts this whole matter upon a very fair and reaſonable iſſue, and that nothing more needs to be ſaid concerning it.

Secondly, from what hath been ſaid in the foregoing diſcourſe, it naturally follows, that GOD is the only object of our truſt and confidence, and therefore to him alone, and to no other, we ought to addreſs all our prayers and ſupplications "for "mercy and grace to help in time of need." But now, according to the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome, the pſalmiſt here puts a very odd and ſtrange queſtion, "whom have I in heaven but "thee?" To which they muſt give a quite different anſwer from what the pſalmiſt plainly intended; namely, that GOD was the ſole object of his hope and truſt, and that upon him alone he relied as his only comfort and happineſs: but to this aſſertion of the pſalmiſt the church of Rome can by no means agree: they underſtand this matter much better than the pſalmiſt did; namely, that beſides GOD, there are in heaven innumerable angels and ſaints, in whom we are to repoſe great truſt and confidence, and to whom alſo we are to addreſs ſolemn prayers and ſupplications, not only for temporal good things, but for the pardon of our ſins, for the increaſe of our graces, and for eternal life. That there are in heaven particular advocates and patrons for all exigencies and occaſions, againſt all ſorts of dangers and diſeaſes, for all graces and virtues; and, in a word, for all temporal, ſpiritual, and eternal bleſſings; to whom we may apply our ſelves, without troubling GOD and our bleſſed SAVIOUR, who alſo is "GOD bleſſed for evermore," by preſuming upon every

SERM. XL.

every occaſion to make our immediate addreſſes to him: for as they would make us believe, though Abraham was ignorant of it, and David knew it not, the bleſſed ſpirits above, both angels and ſaints, do not only intercede with GOD for us for all ſorts of bleſſings, but we may make direct and immediate addreſſes to them to beſtow theſe bleſſings upon us: for ſo they do in the church of Rome, as is evident, beyond all denial, from ſeveral of their prayers in their moſt publick and authentick liturgies.

They would indeed fain palliate this matter, by telling us, that by theſe direct and immediate addreſſes to angels and ſaints to beſtow grace and eternal life upon them, they mean no more but only to pray to them that they would be pleaſed to intercede with GOD for theſe bleſſings to be beſtowed upon them by their mediation: but if they mean no more, why do they ſay more than they mean? Why do they uſe ſuch expreſſions as to the common ſenſe and underſtanding of mankind do ſignify a great deal more than they ſay they mean; ſuch expreſſions, as they themſelves do acknowledge, if they be underſtood according to the moſt obvious ſenſe of the words, would render them guilty of flat idolatry? Eſpecially when they know, that they are charged with idolatry upon this account; and ſince to clear themſelves of it they will not alter their prayers, they juſtly lie under the ſuſpicion of it.

And yet admitting what they ſay in this matter to be true, and that by theſe expreſſions in their prayers they intend no more but their ſolemn invocation of angels and ſaints, that they would intercede with GOD to beſtow theſe bleſſings upon them for the ſake

of their merits, and upon their mediation: yet this ſurely is a great deal too much, and cannot be done without a high entrenchment upon the office of the only "mediator between GOD and man, the man "CHRIST JESUS:" but let them not deceive themſelves, "GOD is not mocked: the LORD our GOD is a jealous GOD," and "he will not give his glory "to another."

I have not yet inſtanced in the groſſeſt part of their ſuperſtition, not to ſay downright idolatry, in this kind; I mean, in their extravagant worſhip of the bleſſed virgin and mother of our LORD; whom they blaſphemouſly call the queen of heaven; and whom, by a new ſtile, unknown to the ſcriptures and primitive antiquity, they think to dignify with the modiſh title of our lady; as if that could be any addition of honour to her, whom the angel declared to be "bleſſed among women:" who, if ſhe know any thing of the follies of her worſhippers here below, with what diſdain and indignation do we think ſhe hears thoſe infinite prayers that are made to her, and that ſacrilegious worſhip which is given her in that church, and which makes both pages of their religion; and which for the frequency of it, both in their publick and private devotions, is very much beyond what they give to GOD and CHRIST? As if there were "none in heaven but ſhe," nor "any "thing upon earth" to be worſhipped in compariſon of "her image."

Nay, ſo far have they carried this extravagant folly, and how much farther they would have carried it, had not the reformation given a check to it, GOD only knows: ſo far, I ſay, have they proceeded in this

SERM. XL.

this folly, as, in that famous book of their devotions, called "Our lady's pſalter," not only to apply to her ſome part of this pſalm, out of which I have taken my text, beginning it thus: "How good is GOD to "Iſrael, to them that worſhip his bleſſed mother?" But they have likewiſe profanely burleſqued, I cannot afford it a better term, this whole book of pſalms, applying to her almoſt the higheſt things that are there ſaid concerning GOD and our bleſſed SAVIOUR. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, and be "ye horribly aſtoniſhed," to ſee the beſt and wiſeſt religion in the world transformed into ſuperſtition and folly; and to ſee the moſt learned perſons in that communion ſet themſelves in good earneſt to juſtify all theſe follies and abſurdities, by a grave and groundleſs pretence to infallibility.

Thirdly and laſtly, this ſhews us how neceſſary the favour of GOD is to every man's happineſs: and there is but one way to gain his friendſhip and favour, by becoming holy and good as he is: then may we rejoice and glory in GOD, as the pſalmiſt here does, and ſay, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and "there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee." A wicked man dreads GOD above all things in the world, and he has great reaſon to do ſo: "for he "is not a GOD that hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, "neither ſhall evil dwell with him: the fooliſh ſhall "not ſtand in his ſight, he hateth all the workers of "iniquity." When by ſin we depart from GOD, we forſake our own happineſs: "ſalvation is far "from the wickedness," ſays St. David. And again, a little after the text, "they that are far from thee "ſhall periſh, but it is good for me to draw near to "GOD."

Pſal. cxix.

" GOD." Now by holiness and goodness we draw near to him, who alone can make us happy. SERM. XL.

It is certainly the common interest of mankind there should be a GOD, because we cannot possibly be happy without him: but then it is no man's interest to be wicked, because thereby we make him our enemy " in whose favour is life," and upon whom all our hopes of happiness do depend.

To conclude, if we would have GOD for our happiness, we must be sure to make him our friend; and then we may promise to our selves all those advantages which the friendship of so great and powerful a patron can give us: and there is but one way to establish a firm friendship between GOD and us, and that is, by doing his will, and living in obedience to his laws: " Ye are my friends," saith our blessed LORD, " if ye do whatsoever I command you: This is the " love of GOD," saith St. John, " that we keep his " commandments:" and to love GOD is the way to be made partakers of those glorious " things which " GOD hath prepared for them that love him: such " as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have " entered into the heart of man:" which GOD of his infinite goodness grant we may all at last be partakers of, for his mercies sake in JESUS CHRIST; to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON XLI.

A thankſgiving-ſermon for the late victory at ſea.

Preached before the Queen at Whitehall, March the 20th 1692.

JER. ix. 23, 24.

Thus ſaith the LORD, *let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I am the* LORD, *which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the earth: for in theſe things I delight, ſaith the* LORD.

SERM. XLI.

THeſe words are a meſſage from GOD, ſent by his prophet to the people of the Jews, who truſted in their own wiſdom, and might, and riches, for their ſafety and preſervation from that deſtruction which, in the former part of this chapter, GOD had threatned to bring upon them by the king of Babylon. To take them off from this vain confidence is this meſſage ſent to them, "Thus ſaith the "LORD, let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, "neither let the mighty man glory in his might; "let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let "him that glorieth glory in this, that he underſtand-

"eth

" eth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD, which SERM. XLI.
" exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righ-
" teousness in the earth: for in these things I de-
" light, saith the LORD."

In the handling of these words, I shall abstract from the particular occasion of them, and only consider the general truth contained in them: which I shall do under these two heads.

First, what we are not to glory in: " let not the wise
" man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty
" man glory in his might; let not the rich man glo-
" ry in his riches."

Secondly, what it is that is the matter of true glory:
" but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he un-
" derstandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD,
" which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment,
" and righteousness in the earth."

I. " What we are not to glory in." The text instanceth in three things which are the great idols of mankind, and in which they are very apt to pride themselves, and to place their confidence; namely, wisdom, and might, and riches. I shall consider these severally, and shew how little reason there is to glory in any of them.

1. " Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom." This may comprehend both human knowledge, and likewise prudence in the management of affairs. We will suppose both these to be intended here by the name of wisdom, " let not the wise man glory
" in his wisdom;" that is, neither in the largeness and compass of his knowledge and understanding, nor in his skill and dexterity in the contrivance and conduct of human affairs; and that for these two reasons.

SERM. XLI.

Firſt, becauſe the higheſt pitch of human knowledge and wiſdom is very imperfect.

Secondly, becauſe when knowledge and wiſdom are with much difficulty in any competent meaſure attained, how eaſily are they loſt?

Firſt, the higheſt pitch of human knowledge and wiſdom is very imperfect. Our ignorance doth vaſtly exceed our knowledge at the beſt. Wiſdom in any tolerable degree is difficult to be attained, but perfection in it utterly to be deſpaired of. Where is there to be found ſo ſtrong and ſound a head, as hath no ſoft place: ſo perfect, ſo clear an underſtanding as hath no flaw, no dark water in it? How hard a matter is it to be truly wiſe? And yet there are ſo many pretenders to wiſdom as would almoſt tempt a man to think that nothing is eaſier. Men do frequently murmur and repine at the unequal diſtribution of other things, as of health and ſtrength, of power and riches: but if we will truſt the judgment of moſt men concerning themſelves, nothing is more equally ſhared among mankind than a good degree of wiſdom and underſtanding. Many will grant others to be ſuperior to them in other gifts of nature, as in bodily ſtrength and ſtature; and in the gifts of fortune, as in riches and honour; becauſe the difference between one man and another in theſe qualities is many times ſo groſs and palpable, that no body hath the face to deny it: but very few in compariſon, unleſs it be in mere compliment and civility, will yield others to be wiſer than themſelves; and yet the difference in this alſo is for the moſt part very viſible to every body but themſelves.

So that true wiſdom is a thing very extraordinary.

Happy

Happy are they that have it: and, next to them, not those many that think they have it, but those few that are sensible of their own defects and imperfections, and know that they have it not. SERM. XLI.

And among all the kinds of wisdom none is more nice and difficult, and meets with more frequent disappointments, than that which men are most apt to pride themselves in, I mean political wisdom and prudence; because it depends upon so many contingent causes, any one of which failing the best laid design breaks and falls in pieces: it depends upon the uncertain wills and fickle humours, the mistaken and mutable interests of men, which are perpetually shifting from one point to another, so that no body knows where to find them: besides an unaccountable mixture of that which the heathen called fortune, but we Christians by it's true name, the providence of GOD; which does frequently interpose in human affairs, and loves to "confound the wisdom of "the wise," and "to turn their counsels into foolishness."

Of this we have a most remarkable example in Achitophel, of whose wisdom the scripture gives this extraordinary testimony, that "the counsel "which he counselled in those days was as if one "had enquired at the oracle of GOD: such was all "the counsel of Achitophel both with David and "with Absalom." It seems he gave very good counsel also to Absalom, and because he would not follow it, was discontented to that degree as to lay violent hands upon himself: and now who would pride himself in being so very wise as to be able to give the best counsel in the world, and yet so very weak

as

SERM. XLI.

as to make away himſelf, becauſe he to whom it was given was not wiſe enough to take it?

The like miſcarriages often happen in point of military ſkill and prudence. A great prince or general is ſometimes ſo very cautious and wary, that nothing can provoke him to a battle; and then at another time, and perhaps in another element, ſo raſh and wilful that nothing can hinder him from fighting and being beaten: as if the two elements made the difference; and caution were great wiſdom at land, and confidence and preſumption great prudence at ſea. But the true reaſon of theſe things lies much deeper, in the ſecret providence of Almighty GOD, who when he pleaſes can ſo govern and over-rule both the underſtandings and the wills of men, as ſhall beſt ſerve his own wiſe purpoſe and deſign.

And as the higheſt pitch of human wiſdom is very imperfect in it ſelf, ſo is it much more ſo in compariſon with the divine knowledge and wiſdom: compared with this it is mere folly, and leſs than the underſtanding and wiſdom of a child to that of the wiſeſt man. "The fooliſhneſs of GOD," ſays St. Paul, "is "wiſer than men;" that is, the leaſt grain of divine wiſdom is infinitely beyond all the wiſdom of men: but in oppoſition to the wiſdom of GOD, the wiſdom of men is leſs than nothing and vanity. Let men deſign things never ſo prudently, and make them never ſo ſure, even to the Popiſh and French degree of infallibility; let them reckon upon it as a blow that cannot fail: yet after all, the counſel of the LORD that ſhall ſtand, and he will do all his pleaſure; "for there is no wiſdom, nor underſtand-"ing, nor counſel againſt the LORD."

1 Cor. i. 25.

SERM. XLI.

And now we may ask the question which Job does, "where shall wisdom be found, and where is the "place of understanding?" And we must answer it as he does, "it is not to be found in the land of "the living:" unless it be that one infallible point of wisdom to which GOD directs every man, and of which every man is capable, viz. religion and the fear of GOD, "unto man he said, behold! the fear "of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from "evil is understanding."

Job xxviii. 12, 13.

Job xxviii. 28.

Secondly, when knowledge and wisdom are with great difficulty in any competent measure attained, how easily are they lost? By a disease, by a blow upon the head; by a sudden and violent passion, which may disorder the strongest brain, and confound the clearest understanding in a moment: nay even the excess of knowledge and wisdom, especially if attended with pride, as too often it is, is very dangerous, and does many times border upon distraction and run into madness: like an athletick constitution and perfect state of health, which is observed by physicians to verge upon some dangerous disease, and to be a forerunner of it.

And when a man's understanding is once craz'd and shattered, how are the finest notions and thoughts of the wisest man blunder'd and broken, perplexed and entangled? Like a puzzled lump of silk, so that the man cannot draw out a thought to any length, but is forced to break it off and to begin at another end. Upon all which and many more accounts, "let not the wise man glory in his wisdom," which is so very imperfect; so hard to be attained, and yet so easy to be lost.

2. "Neither

SERM. XLI.

2. "Neither let the mighty man glory in his "might," which whether it be meant of natural ſtrength of body, or of military force and power, how weak and imperfect is it, and how frequently foiled by an unequal ſtrength?

If we underſtand it of the natural ſtrength of men's bodies, how little reaſon is there to glory in that, in which ſo many of the creatures below us do by ſo many degrees excel us? In that, which may ſo many ways be loſt; by ſickneſs, by a maim, and by many other external accidents; and which however will decay of it ſelf, and by age ſink into infirmity and weakneſs.

And how little reaſon is there to glory in that, which is ſo frequently foiled by an unequal ſtrength? Of which Goliah is a famous inſtance. When he defied the hoſt of Iſrael, and would needs have the matter decided by ſingle combat, GOD inſpired David to accept the challenge; who though he was no wiſe comparable to him in ſtrength, and would have been nothing in his hands in cloſe fight, yet GOD directed him to aſſail him at a diſtance by a weapon that was too hard for him, a ſtone out of a ſling, which ſtruck the giant in the forehead, and brought his unwieldy bulk down to the earth.

Or if by might we underſtand military force and power, how little likewiſe is that to be gloried in? Conſidering the uncertain events of war, and how very often and remarkably the providence of GOD doth interpoſe to caſt the victory on the unlikely ſide. It is Solomon's obſervation, that ſuch are the interpoſitions of divine providence in human affairs, that the event of things is many times not at all anſwerable

swerable to the power and probability of second causes: "I returned," says he, "and saw under the "sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the "battle to the strong." SERM. XLI. Eccl. ix. 11.

And one way, among many others, whereby the providence of GOD doth often interpose to decide the events of war, is by a remarkable change of the seasons and weather in favour of one side: as by sending great snows, or violent rains, to hinder the early motion and march of a powerful army, to the disappointment or prejudice of some great design: by remarkable winds and storms at sea, to prevent the conjunction of a powerful fleet: and by governing all these for a long time together so visibly to the advantage of one side as utterly to defeat the well laid design of the other. Of all which, by the great mercy and goodness of GOD to us, we have had the happy experience in all our late signal deliverances and victories.

And here I cannot but take notice of a passage to this purpose in the book of Job: which may deserve our more attentive regard and consideration, because I take this book to be incomparably the most ancient of all other, and much elder than Moses: and yet it is written with as lively a sense of the providence of GOD, and as noble figures and flights of eloquence as perhaps any book extant in the world. The passage I mean is, where GOD, to convince Job of his ignorance in the secrets of nature and providence, poseth him with many hard questions, and with this amongst the rest, "Hast "thou entred into the treasures of the snow? Hast "thou seen the treasures of the hail? which I have Job. xxxviii. 22, 23.

SERM. XLI.

" reſerved againſt the time of trouble, againſt the " day of battle and war." The meaning of which is, that the providence of GOD doth ſometimes interpoſe to determine the events of war, by governing the ſeaſons and the weather, and by making the ſnows and rains, " the winds and ſtorms to ful- " fil his word," and to execute his pleaſure.

Of this we have a remarkable inſtance in the defeat of Siſera's mighty army; againſt whom, in the ſong of Deborah, the ſtars are ſaid to " have fought " in their courſes:" the expreſſion is poetical, but the plain meaning of it is, that by mighty and ſudden rains, which the common opinion did aſcribe to a ſpecial influence of the planets, the river of Kiſhon, near which Siſera's army lay, was ſo raiſed and ſwoln as to drown the greateſt part of that huge hoſt. For ſo Deborah explains the " fighting of the ſtars " in their courſes againſt Siſera:" " they fought," ſay ſhe, " from heaven, the ſtars in their courſes " fought againſt Siſera, the river of Kiſhon ſwept " them away:" as if the ſtars, which were ſuppoſed by their influence to have cauſed thoſe ſudden and extraordinary rains, had ſet themſelves in battle-array againſt Siſera and his army.

Therefore, " let not the mighty man glory in " his might," which is ſo ſmall in it ſelf, but in oppoſition to GOD is weakneſs and nothing. " The " weakneſs of GOD," ſays St. Paul, " is ſtronger " than men." All power to do miſchief is but impotence, and therefore no matter of boaſting: " why " boaſteſt thou thy ſelf, thou tyrant, that thou art " able to do miſchief? The goodneſs of GOD endu- " reth continually:" the goodneſs of GOD is too

Pſal. lii. 1.

hard

hard for the pride and malice of man, and will last and hold out when that has tired and spent it self. SERM. XLI.

Thirdly, "let not the rich man glory in his riches." In these, men are apt to pride themselves: even the meanest and poorest spirits, who have nothing to be proud of but their money, when they have got good store of that together, how will they swell and strut? as if because they are rich and increased in goods they wanted nothing.

But we may do well to consider, that riches are things without us; not the real excellencies of our nature, but the accidental ornaments of our fortune. If they descend upon us, they are the privilege of our birth, not the effect of our wisdom and industry; and those things in the procurement whereof we had no hand, we can hardly call our own: and if they be the fruit of our own prudent industry, that is no such matter of glorying; because men of much slower understandings do commonly out-do others in diligence and drudging, their minds lying more level to the low design of being rich.

At the best, riches are uncertain. "Charge them," says St. Paul, "that are rich in this world, that they "be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches:" men have little reason to pride themselves, or to place their confidence in that which is uncertain, and even next to that which is not: So the wise man speaks of riches, "wilt thou set thine heart "upon that which is not? for riches certainly make "themselves wings, and fly as an eagle towards "heaven:" he expresses it in such a manner, as if a rich man sat brooding over an estate till it was fledg'd and had gotten it self wings to fly away. Prov. xxiii. 5.

SERM. XLI.

But that which is the moſt ſtinging conſideration of all is, that many men have an evil eye upon a good eſtate; ſo that inſtead of being the means of our happineſs, it may prove the occaſion of our ruin: ſo the ſame wiſe man obſerves, "there is a ſore "evil which I have ſeen under the ſun, namely, "riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." And it is not without example, that a very rich man hath been excepted out of a general pardon, both as to life and eſtate, for no other viſible reaſon but his vaſt and over-grown fortune: ſo Solomon obſerves to us again, "ſuch are the ways of every one that "is greedy of gain, which taketh away the life of "the owners thereof." And why ſhould any man be proud of his danger, of that which one time or other may be the certain and only cauſe of his ruin? A man may be too rich to be forgiven a fault which would never have been proſecuted againſt a man of a middle fortune. For theſe reaſons, and a great many more, "let not the rich man glory in his riches."

Eccl. v. 13.

Prov. i. 18.

II. II. I proceed to conſider, what it is that is matter of true glory. "But let him that glorieth glory "in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, "that I am the LORD, which exerciſe loving-kind-"neſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the "earth: for in theſe things I delight, ſaith the "LORD."

"That he underſtandeth and knoweth me:" here are two words uſed to expreſs the thing more fully, underſtanding and knowledge; which ſeem not only to import right apprehenſions of the being, and providence, and perfections of GOD; but likewiſe a lively

a lively sense of these things, and affections suitable to these apprehensions. SERM. XLI.

"That he understandeth and knoweth me, that "I am the LORD," that is the creator, and the sovereign governor of the world.

"Which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, "and righteousness in the earth."

The best knowledge of religion, and that which is the foundation of all the rest, is the knowledge of the divine nature and perfections: especially of those which are most proper for our imitation; and such are those mentioned in the text, loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness: which we may distinguish thus: loving-kindness comprehends GOD's milder attributes, his goodness, and mercy, and patience: judgment signifies his severer dealings with men, whether in the chastisement of his people, or in the remarkable punishment of great offenders for example and warning to others: righteousness seems to be a word of a larger signification, and to denote that universal rectitude of the divine nature which appears in all the administrations of the providence here below; for the text speaks of the exercise of these perfections in this world: "which exercise lov-"ing-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness "in the earth."

Several of the perfections of the divine nature are incommunicable to a creature, and therefore cannot be thought to be proposed to us for a pattern; as self-existence, independence, and all-sufficiency; the eternity, and the immensity of the divine being; to be the original cause of all other things, and the sovereign governor of the whole world: for GOD only

is

SERM. XLI.

is ſufficient for that; and to be a match for all the world, a *nec pluribus impar*, is not a motto fit for a mortal man. A creature may ſwell with pride till it burſt, before it can ſtretch it ſelf to this pitch of power and greatneſs: it is an inſufferable preſumption, and a ſottiſh ignorance of the neceſſary bounds and limits of our being, to think to reſemble GOD in theſe perfections: this was the ambition of Lucifer, to aſcend into heaven, and to be like the moſt high.

In our imitation of GOD we muſt ſtill keep within the ſtation of creatures; not affecting an independency and ſovereignty like GOD, and to be omnipotent as he is: "haſt thou an arm like GOD, and "canſt thou thunder with a voice like him?" as GOD himſelf argues with Job.

Job. xl. 9.

"For in theſe things I delight, ſaith the LORD." GOD takes pleaſure to exerciſe theſe perfections himſelf, and to ſee them imitated by us; and the imitation of theſe divine perfections is our perfection and glory; in compariſon of which all human wiſdom, and power, and riches, are ſo far from being matter of glory, that they are very deſpicable and pitiful things: knowledge and ſkill to deviſe miſchief, and power to effect it, are the true nature and character of the devil and his angels; thoſe apoſtate and accurſed ſpirits, who in temper and diſpoſition are moſt contrary to GOD, who is the rule and pattern of all perfection.

I ſhall only make two obſervations or inferences from what hath been ſaid, and then apply the whole diſcourſe to the great occaſion of this day: and they are theſe.

Firſt,

SERM. XLI.

First, that the wisest and surest reasonings in religion are grounded upon the unquestionable perfections of the divine nature.

Secondly, that the nature of GOD is the true idea and pattern of perfection and happiness.

First, that the wisest and surest reasonings in religion are grounded upon the unquestionable perfections of the divine nature: upon those more especially which to us are most easy and intelligible: such as are those mentioned in the text. And this makes the knowledge of GOD, and of these perfections, to be so useful and so valuable: because all religion is founded in right notions of GOD, and of his perfections: insomuch that divine revelation it self does suppose these for it's foundation, and can signify nothing to us unless these be first known and believed: for unless we be first firmly persuaded of the providence of GOD, and of his particular care of mankind, why should we suppose that he makes any revelation of his will to us? Unless it be first naturally known that GOD is a GOD of truth, what ground is there for the belief of his word? So that the principles of natural religion are the foundation of that which is revealed: and therefore nothing can in reason be admitted to be a revelation from GOD, which does plainly contradict his essential perfections.

Upon this principle, a great many doctrines are without more a-do to be rejected, because they do plainly and at first sight contradict the divine nature and perfections. I will give a few instances, instead of many that might be given.

In virtue of this principle I cannot believe, upon the pretended authority or infallibility of any person

SERM. XLI.

or church, that force is a fit argument to produce faith: no man ſhall ever perſuade me, no not the biſhop of Meaux with all his eloquence, that priſons and tortures, dragoons and the galleys, are proper means to convince the underſtanding, and either Chriſtian or human methods of converting men to the true religion.

For the ſame reaſon I cannot believe, that GOD would not have men to underſtand their publick prayers, nor the leſſons of ſcripture which are read to them: becauſe a leſſon is ſomething that is to be learnt, and therefore a leſſon that is not to be underſtood is nonſenſe; for if it be not underſtood how can it be learnt?

As little can I believe, that GOD, who cauſed the holy ſcriptures to be written for the inſtruction of mankind, did ever intend that they ſhould be locked up and concealed from the people in an unknown tongue.

Leaſt of all can I believe that doctrine of the council of Trent, that the ſaving efficacy of the ſacraments doth depend upon the intention of the prieſt that adminiſters them: which is to ſay, that though the people believe and live never ſo well, yet they may be damned by ſhoals, and whole pariſhes together, at the pleaſure of the prieſt: and this for no other reaſon, but becauſe the prieſt is ſo croſs and ſo cruel that he will not intend to ſave them.

Now can any man believe this that has any tolerable notion either of the goodneſs or juſtice of GOD? May we not appeal to GOD in this, as Abraham did in another caſe? "Wilt thou deſtroy the righteous "with the wicked? That be far from thee, to do "after

" after this manner: shall not the judge of all the " earth do right?" Much more, to destroy the righteous for the wicked, and that righteous and innocent people should lie at the mercy and will of a wicked and perverse priest, to be saved or damned by him as he thinks fit, " that be far from thee: " shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" For, to drive the argument to the head, if this be to do right there is no possibility of doing wrong.

Thus in things which are more obscure we should govern all our reasonings concerning God and religion by that which is clear and unquestionable, and should with Moses lay down this for a certain principle, " all his ways are judgment, a God of truth, " and without iniquity, just and right is he:" and say with St. Paul, " is there then unrighteousness " with God? God forbid!" And again, " we know " that the judgment of God is according to truth."

2dly, The other inference is this, that the nature of God is the true idea and pattern of perfection and happiness: and therefore nothing but our own conformity to it can make us happy: and for this reason, to understand and know God is our great excellency and glory, because it is necessary to our imitation of him who is the best and happiest being. And so far as we are from resembling God, so far are we distant from happiness and the true temper of the blessed. For goodness is an essential ingredient of happiness; and as without goodness there can be no true majesty and greatness, so neither any true felicity and blessedness.

Now goodness is a generous disposition of mind to diffuse and communicate it self by making others to

4.

SERM. XLI.

partake of our happineſs, in ſuch degrees as they are capable: for no being is ſo happy as it might be, that hath not the power and the pleaſure to make others happy: this ſurely is the higheſt pleaſure, I had almoſt ſaid pride, of a great mind.

In vain therefore do we dream of happineſs in any thing without us. Happineſs muſt be within us; the foundation of it muſt be laid in the inward frame and diſpoſition of our ſpirits: and the very ſame cauſes and ingredients which make up the happineſs of GOD muſt be found in us, though in a much inferior degree, or we cannot be happy. They underſtand not the nature of happineſs, who hope for it upon any other terms: he who is the author and fountain of happineſs cannot convey it to us by any other way, than by planting in us ſuch diſpoſitions of mind as are in truth a kind of participation of the divine nature, and by enduing us with ſuch qualities as are the neceſſary materials of happineſs: and a man may as ſoon be well without health as happy without goodneſs.

If a wicked man were taken up into heaven, yet if he ſtill continue the ſame bad man that he was before, *cælum, non animum mutavit*, he may have changed the climate, and be gone into a far country; but becauſe he carries himſelf ſtill along with him, he will ſtill be miſerable from himſelf: becauſe the man's mind is not changed all the while, which would ſignify a thouſand times more to his happineſs, than change of place, or of any outward circumſtances whatſoever: for a bad man hath a fiend in his own breaſt, and the fuel of hell in his guilty conſcience.

There

SERM. XLI.

There is a certain kind of temper and disposition which is necessary and essential to happiness, and that is holiness and goodness, which is the very nature of GOD; and so far as any man departs from this temper, so far he removes himself and runs away from happiness. And here the foundation of hell is laid, in the evil disposition of a man's own mind, which is naturally a torment to it self: and till this be cured, it is as impossible for him to be happy, as for a limb that is out of joint to be at ease; because the man's spirit is out of order, and off the hinges, and as it were tossed from it's center; and till that be set right, and restored to it's proper and natural state, the man will be perpetually unquiet, and can have no rest and peace within himself. "The wicked," saith the prophet, "is like the "troubled sea, when it cannot rest: there is no "peace, saith my GOD, to the wicked:" no peace with GOD, no peace with his own mind; for a bad man is at perpetual discord and wars within himself: and hence, as St. James tells us, "come wars and "fightings without us, even from our lusts which "war in our members."

And now that I have mentioned wars and fightings without us, this cannot but bring to mind the great and glorious occasion of this day: which gives us manifold cause of praise and thanksgiving to Almighty GOD: for several wonderful mercies and deliverances; and more particularly, for a most glorious victory at sea, vouchsafed to their majesties fleet in this last summer's expedition.

For several great mercies and deliverances: for a wonderful deliverance indeed, from a sudden inva-

SERM. XLI.

ſion deſigned upon us by the inveterate and implacable enemies of our peace and religion; which by the merciful providence of GOD was happily and ſtrangely prevented, when it was juſt upon the point of execution.

Next, for the preſervation of our gracious ſovereign, from that horrid and moſt barbarous attempt deſigned upon his ſacred perſon: and from thoſe great and manifold dangers to which he was expoſed in his late tedious expedition: and for his ſafe and moſt welcome return to us.

And laſtly, for a moſt glorious victory at ſea: the greateſt and the cheapeſt that ever the ſun ſaw, from his firſt ſetting out to run his courſe. The opportunity indeed of this victory was through the raſhneſs and confidence of our enemies, by the wiſe providence of GOD, put into our hands: but the improvement of this opportunity into ſo great and happy a victory we owe, under GOD, to the matchleſs conduct and courage of the brave admiral, and to the invincible reſolution and valour of the captains and ſeamen.

This great deliverance from the deſigned invaſion, and this glorious victory, GOD vouchſafed to us at home, whilſt his ſacred majeſty was ſo freely hazarding his royal perſon abroad, in the publick cauſe of the rights and liberties of almoſt all Europe.

And now what may GOD juſtly expect from us, as a meet return for his goodneſs to us? What? but that we ſhould glorify him, firſt by offering praiſe and thankſgiving; and then, by ordering our converſation aright, that he may ſtill delight to ſhew us his ſalvation.

GOD

SERM. XLI.

God might have stood aloof from us in the day of our distress, and have said to us, as he once did to the people of Israel, so often have I delivered you from the hands of your enemies, but ye have still provoked me more and more, "wherefore I will de- Judg. x. "liver you no more:" he might have said of us, 13. as he did of the same people, "I will hide my face Deut. "from them, I will see what their end shall be: xxxii. 20. "for they are a very froward generation, children "in whom is no faith:" our resolutions and promises of better obedience are not to be trusted; all our repentance and righteousness are but "as the "morning cloud, and like the early dew that pas- "seth away:" nay methinks God seems now to say to us, as he did of old to Jerusalem, "be instruct- Jer. vi. 8. "ed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, "and I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited."

We are here met together this day, to pay our solemn acknowledgments to "the God of our salva- "tion; who hath shewed strength with his arm, "and hath scattered the proud in the imagination "of their heart:" even to "him that exerciseth lov- "ing-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in "the earth:" in him will we glory as our sure refuge and defence, as our mighty deliverer, and the rock of our salvation.

And now I have only to entreat your patience a little longer, whilst I apply what hath been discoursed upon this text a little more closely to the occasion of this day. I may be tedious, but I will not be long.

And blessed be God for this happy occasion: the greatest England ever had, and, in the true conse-

quences

SERM. XLI.

quences of it, perhaps the greateſt that Europe ever had of praiſe and thankſgiving.

You have heard two ſorts of perſons deſcribed in the text, by very different characters: the one, that glory in their wiſdom and might, and riches: the other, that glory in this, that they "underſtand "and know GOD to be the LORD, which exerciſeth "loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs "in the earth."

And we have ſeen theſe two characters exemplified, or rather drawn to the life, in this preſent age. We who live in this weſtern part of Chriſtendom have ſeen a mighty prince, by the juſt permiſſion of GOD, raiſed up to be a terror and ſcourge to all his neighbours: a prince, who had in perfection all the advantages mentioned in the former part of the text: and who, in the opinion of many who had been long dazzled with his ſplendor and greatneſs, hath paſſed for many years, for the moſt politick, and powerful, and richeſt monarch that hath appeared in theſe parts of the world, for many ages.

Who hath governed his affairs by the deepeſt and ſteadieſt counſels, and the moſt refined wiſdom of this world: a prince mighty and powerful in his preparations for war; formidable for his vaſt and well diſciplined armies, and for his great naval force: and who had brought the art of war almoſt to that perfection, as to be able to conquer and do his buſineſs without fighting: a myſtery hardly known to former ages and generations: and all this ſkill and ſtrength united under one abſolute will, not hampered or bound up by any reſtraints of law or conſcience.

A prince

SERM. XLI.

A prince that commands the estates of all his subjects, and of all his conquests; which hath furnished him with an almost inexhaustible treasure and revenue: and one, who if the world doth not greatly mistake him, hath sufficiently gloried in all these advantages, and even beyond the rate of a mortal man.

But not "knowing God to be the LORD, which "exercises loving-kindness, and judgment, and "righteousness in the earth;" how hath the pride of all his glory been stained by tyranny and oppression, by injustice and cruelty; by enlarging his dominions without right, and by making war upon his neighbours without reason, or even colour of provocation? And this in a more barbarous manner than the most barbarous nations ever did; carrying fire and desolation wheresoever he went, and laying waste many and great cities without necessity, and without pity.

And now behold what a terrible rebuke the providence of God hath given to this mighty monarch, in the full career of his fortune and fury. The consideration whereof brings to my thoughts those passages in the prophet concerning old Babylon, that standing and perpetual type of the great oppressors and persecutors of God's true church and religion: "How is the oppressor ceased? the exactor of gold "ceased? He who smote the people in wrath with Isa. xiv. "a continual stroke, he who ruled the nations in "anger is himself persecuted, and none hindreth. "The whole earth is at rest and is quiet, and breaks "forth into singing: the grave beneath is moved "for thee, to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth "up the dead for thee, even all the captains of

SERM. XLI.

" the earth; it hath raiſed up from their thrones " all the kings of the nations; all they ſhall ſpeak " and ſay unto thee, art thou alſo become weak " as we are? art thou alſo become like unto us? " How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, " ſon of the morning? How art thou cut down " to the ground that didſt weaken the nations? " For thou haſt ſaid in thy heart, I will a- " ſcend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above " the ſtars of GOD: I will ſit alſo upon the mount " of the congregation in the ſides of the north," that is, upon mount Zion, for juſt ſo the pſalmiſt deſcribes it, " beautiful for ſituation, the joy of the " whole earth is mount Zion, on the ſides of the " north." Here the king of Babylon threatens to take Jeruſalem, and to demoliſh the temple where the congregation of Iſrael met for the worſhip of the true GOD; " I will alſo ſit upon the mount of " the congregation in the ſides of the north." Much in the ſame ſtile with the threatnings of modern Babylon, " I will deſtroy the reformation, I " will extirpate the northern hereſy."

Pſal. xlviii. 2.

And then he goes on, " I will aſcend above the " height of the clouds, I will be like the moſt high: " yet thou ſhalt be brought down to the grave, to " the ſides of the pit: they that ſee thee ſhall nar- " rowly look upon thee, and conſider thee, ſaying, " is this the man that made the earth to tremble, " that did ſhake kingdoms; that made the world as " a wilderneſs, and deſtroyed the cities thereof, and " opened not the houſe of his priſoners?"

GOD ſeems already to have begun this work, in the late glorious victory at ſea; and I hope he will

" cut

" cut it short in righteousness." I have sometimes heretofore wondred, why at the destruction of modern and mystical Babylon the scripture should make so express mention of great wailing and lamentation for the loss of her " ships" and " seamen :" little imagining thirty years ago, that any of the kingdoms who had " given their power to the beast" would ever have arrived to that mighty naval force: but the " scripture saith nothing in vain." SERM. XLI. Rev. xviii. 17.

Whether, and how far, success is an argument of a good cause, I shall not now debate; but thus much, I think, may safely be affirmed, that the providence of God doth sometimes, without plain and downright miracles, so visibly shew it self, that we cannot without great stupidity and obstinacy refuse to acknowledge it.

I grant, the cause must first be manifestly just, before success can be made an argument of God's favour to it and approbation of it: and if the cause of true religion, and the necessary defence of it against a false and idolatrous worship, be a good cause, ours is so: and I do not here beg the question; we have abundantly proved it to the confusion of our adversaries: if the vindication of the common liberties of mankind against tyranny and oppression, be a good cause, than ours is so: and this needs not to be proved, it is so glaringly evident to all the world. And as our cause is not like theirs, so neither hath their rock been like our rock, our enemies themselves being judges.

And yet as bad an argument as success is of a good cause, I am sorry to say it, but I am afraid it is too true, it is like in the conclusion to prove the best

SERM. XLI.

argument of all other to convince thoſe who have ſo long pretended conſcience againſt ſubmiſſion to the preſent government.

Mere ſucceſs is certainly one of the worſt arguments in the world of a good cauſe, and the moſt improper to ſatisfy conſcience: and yet we find by experience, that in the iſſue it is the moſt ſucceſsful of all other arguments; and does in a very odd, but effectual way, ſatisfy the conſciences of a great many men by ſhewing them their intereſt.

GOD has of late viſibly made bare his arm in our behalf, though ſome are ſtill ſo blind and obſtinate that they will not ſee it: like thoſe of whom the prophet complains, "LORD, when thy hand is lift-
Iſa. xxvi. 11. "ed up they will not ſee, but they ſhall ſee, and "be aſhamed for their envy at thy people."

Thus have I repreſented unto you a mighty monarch, who like a fiery comet hath hung over Europe for many years; and by his malignant influence hath made ſuch terrible havock and devaſtations in this part of the world.

Let us now turn our view to the other part of the text: and behold a greater than he is here: a prince of a quite different character, who does "underſtand "and know GOD to be the LORD, which doth ex-"erciſe loving kindneſs, and judgment, and righte-"ouſneſs in the earth:" and who hath made it the great ſtudy and endeavour of his life to imitate theſe divine perfections, as far as the imperfection of human nature in this mortal ſtate will admit: I ſay, a greater than he is here; who never ſaid or did an inſolent thing, but inſtead of deſpiſing his enemies has upon all occaſions encountered them with an undaunted ſpirit and reſolution. This

SERM. XLI.

This is the man whom GOD hath honoured to give a check to this mighty man of the earth, and to put a hook into the nostrils of this great leviathan, who has so long had his pastime in the seas.

But we will not insult, as he once did in a most unprincely manner over a man much better than himself, when he believed him to have been slain at the Boyne: and indeed death came then as near to him as was possible without killing him: but the merciful providence of GOD was pleased to step in for his preservation, almost by a miracle: for I do not believe that from the first use of great guns to that day, any mortal man ever had his shoulder so kindly kiss'd by a cannon-bullet.

But I will not trespass any further upon that which is the great ornament of all his other virtues; though I have said nothing of him but what all the world does see and must acknowledge: he is as much above being flattered, as it is beneath an honest and generous mind to flatter.

Let us then glory in the LORD, and rejoice in the GOD of our salvation: let us now in the presence of all his people pay our most thankful acknowledgments to him "who is worthy to be praised;" even to "the LORD GOD of Israel, who alone doth wonderous things:" who "giveth victory unto kings," and hath "preserved our David his servant from the "hurtful sword."

And let us humbly beseech Almighty GOD, that he would long preserve to us the invaluable blessing of our two excellent princes; whom the providence of GOD hath sent amongst us, like two good angels; not to rescue two or three persons, but almost a

SERM. XLI.

whole nation out of Sodom: by ſaving us I hope at laſt from our vices, as well as at firſt from that vengeance which was juſt ready to have been poured down upon us.

Two ſovereign princes reigning together, and in the ſame throne; and yet ſo intirely one, as perhaps no nation, no age can furniſh us with a parallel; two princes perfectly united in the ſame deſign of promoting the true religion, and the public welfare, by reforming our manners, and as far is poſſible, by repairing the breaches, and healing the diviſions of a miſerably diſtracted church and nation: in a word, two princes who are contented to ſacrifice themſelves and their whole time to the care of the publick: and for the ſake of that to deny themſelves almoſt all ſort of eaſe and pleaſure: To deny themſelves, did I ſay? No, they have wiſely and judiciouſly choſen the trueſt and higheſt pleaſure that this world knows, the pleaſure of doing good, and being benefactors to mankind. May they have a long and happy reign over us, to make us happy, and to lay up in ſtore for themſelves a happineſs, without meaſure, and without end, in GOD's glorious and everlaſting kingdom: for his mercies ſake in JESUS CHRIST, to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, thankſgiving and praiſe, both now and for ever. Amen.

SER-

SERMON XLII.

Againſt evil-ſpeaking.

Preached before the King and Queen at Whitehall, February 25, $169\frac{3}{4}$.

TIT. iii. 2.

To ſpeak evil of no man.

GENERAL perſuaſives to repentance and a good life, and invectives againſt ſin and wickedneſs at large, are certainly of good uſe to recommend religion and virtue, and to expoſe the deformity and danger of a vicious courſe. But it muſt be acknowledged on the other hand, that theſe general diſcourſes do not ſo immediately tend to reform the lives of men: becauſe they fall among the crowd, but do not touch the conſciences of particular perſons, in ſo ſenſible and awakening a manner as when we treat of particular duties and ſins, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other, by proper Arguments taken from the word of GOD, and from the nature of particular virtues and vices. SERM. XLII.

The general way is, as if a phyſician, inſtead of applying particular remedies to the diſtemper of his patient, ſhould entertain him with a long diſcourſe of diſeaſes in general, and of the pleaſure and advantages of health; and earneſtly perſuade him to be

SERM. XLII.

be well, without taking his particular disease into consideration, and prescribing remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we must take to task the great and common disorders of their lives, and represent their faults to them in such a manner as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the common and reigning vices of the age, calumny and evil speaking; by which men contract so much guilt to themselves, and create so much trouble to others: And from which, it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free. For "who is he," saith the son of Sirach, "that hath not offended with his tongue? In many things," saith St. James, "we "offend all: and if any man offend not in word, "the same is a perfect man."

Eccl. xix. 16.

James iii. 2.

But how few have attained to this perfection? And yet unless we do endeavour after it, and in some good measure attain it, all our pretence to religion is vain: so the same Apostle tells us, "If "any man among you seemeth to be religious, and "bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own "heart, that man's religion is vain."

James i. 26.

For the more distinct handling of this argument, I shall reduce my discourse to these five heads.

First, I shall consider the nature of this vice, and wherein it consists.

Secondly, I shall consider the due extent of this prohibition, "to speak evil of no man."

Thirdly,

Thirdly, I ſhall ſhew the evil of this practice, both in the cauſes and effects of it. SERM XLII.

Fourthly, I ſhall add ſome further conſiderations to diſſuade men from it.

Fifthly, I ſhall give ſome rules and directions for the prevention and cure of it.

I. I ſhall conſider what this ſin or vice of evil-ſpeaking, here forbidden by the apoſtle, is: μηδένα βλασφημεῖν, not to defame and ſlander any man, not to hurt his reputation, as the etymology of the word doth import. So that this vice conſiſts in ſaying things of others which tend to their diſparagement and reproach, to the taking away or leſſening of their reputation and good name. And this, whether the things ſaid be true or not. If they be falſe, and we know it, then it is downright calumny; and if we do not know it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a ſlander; and ſo much the more injurious, becauſe really groundleſs and undeſerved. I.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be ſo, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our neighbour's reputation: and it is a fault to ſay the evil of others which is true, unleſs there be ſome good reaſon for it: beſides it is contrary to that charity and goodneſs which Chriſtianity requires, to divulge the faults of others, though they be really guilty of them, without neceſſity or ſome other very good reaſon for it.

Again, it is evil-ſpeaking, and the vice condemned in the text, whether we be the firſt authors of an ill report, or relate it from others; becauſe the man that

SERM. XLII.

that is evil ſpoken of is equally defamed either way.

Again, whether we ſpeak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back: the former way indeed ſeems to be the more generous, but yet is a great fault, and that which we call reviling: the latter is more mean and baſe, and that which we properly call ſlander or backbiting.

And laſtly, whether it be done directly and in expreſs terms, or more obſcurely and by way of oblique inſinuation; whether by way of downright reproach, or with ſome crafty preface of condemnation: for ſo it have the effect to defame, the manner of addreſs does not much alter the caſe: the one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot leſs faulty: for many times the deepeſt wounds are given by theſe ſmoother and more artificial ways of ſlander; as by aſking queſtions, have not you heard ſo and ſo of ſuch a man? I ſay no more; I only aſk the queſtion: or by general intimations, that they are loth to ſay what they have heard of ſuch a one, are very ſorry for it, and do not at all believe it, if you will believe them: and this many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to ſuſpect the worſt.

Theſe and ſuch like arts, though they may ſeem to be tenderer and gentler ways of uſing men's reputation, yet in truth they are the moſt malicious and effectual methods of ſlander; becauſe they inſinuate ſomething that is much worſe than is ſaid, and yet are very apt to create in unwary men, a ſtrong belief of ſomething that is very bad, though they know not what it is. So that it matters not in

what faſhion a ſlander is dreſſed up, if it tend to de- SERM.
fame a man, and to diminiſh his reputation, it is the XLII.
ſin forbidden in the text.

II. We will conſider the extent of this prohibition, " to ſpeak evil of no man ;" and the due bounds and limitations of it. For it is not to be underſtood abſolutely, to forbid us to ſay any thing concerning others that is bad. This in ſome caſes may be neceſſary and our duty, and in ſeveral caſes very fit and reaſonable. The queſtion is, in what caſes by the general rules of ſcripture and right reaſon we are warranted to ſay the evil of others that is true ? II.

In general, we are not to do this without great reaſon and neceſſity ; as, for the prevention of ſome great evil, or the procuring of ſome conſiderable good to ourſelves, or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the ſon of Sirach, " whether it be to a friend or a foe, talk not of " other men's lives ; and if thou canſt without of- " fence reveal them not ;" that is, if without hurt to any body thou canſt conceal them, divulge them not. Eccl. xix. 8.

But becauſe this may not be direction ſufficient, I ſhall inſtance in ſome of the principal caſes, wherein men are warranted to ſpeak evil of others, and yet in ſo doing do not offend againſt this prohibition in the text.

Firſt, it is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty, to do this in order to the probable amendment of the perſon of whom evil is ſpoken. In ſuch a caſe we may tell a man of his faults privately ; or where it may not be ſo fit

4.

SERM. XLII.

for us to uſe that boldneſs and freedom, we may reveal his faults to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him, and will probably make no other uſe of this diſcovery but in order to his amendment. And this is ſo far from being a breach of charity, that it is one of the beſt teſtimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindneſs to give him the opportunity of vindicating himſelf: or if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it he may reform. In this caſe the ſon of Sirach adviſeth to reveal men's faults; "admoniſh "a friend," ſays he, "it may be he hath not done "it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more: "admoniſh a friend, it may be he hath not ſaid it; "and if he have, that he ſpeak it not again: admoniſh a friend, for many times it is a ſlander; "and believe not every tale."

Eccl. xix. 13, 14, 15.

But then we muſt take care that this be done out of kindneſs, and that nothing of our own paſſion be mingled with it; and that under pretence of reproving and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and tell them of their faults in ſuch a manner as if we did it to ſhew our authority rather than our charity. It requires a great deal of addreſs and gentle application ſo to manage the buſineſs of reproof, as not to irritate and exaſperate the perſon whom we reprove, inſtead of curing him.

Secondly, this likewiſe is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witneſs concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuſer, unleſs the publick good, or the prevention of ſome great evil ſhould require

require it. And then the plain reaſon of the thing will ſufficiently juſtify a voluntary accuſation: otherwiſe it hath always among well-manner'd people been eſteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and a forward informer concerning the miſdemeanor of others. Magiſtrates may ſometimes think it fit to give encouragement to ſuch perſons, and to ſet one bad man to catch another, becauſe ſuch men are fitteſt for ſuch dirty work: but they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their friends and confidents. SERM. XLII.

But when a man is called to give teſtimony in this kind in obedience to the laws, and out of reverence to the oath taken in ſuch caſes, he is ſo far from deſerving blame for ſo doing, that it would be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

Thirdly, it is lawful to publiſh the faults of others, in our own neceſſary defence and vindication. When a man cannot conceal another's faults without betraying his own innocency, no charity requires a man to ſuffer himſelf to be defamed to ſave the reputation of another man. "Charity begins at home;" and though a man had never ſo much goodneſs, he would firſt ſecure his own good name, and then be concerned for other men's. We are "to love our "neighbour as ourſelves;" ſo that the love of ourſelves is the rule and meaſure of our love to our neighbour: and therefore firſt, otherwiſe it could not be the rule. And it would be very well for the world, if our charity would riſe thus high; and no man would hurt another man's reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

SERM. XLII.

Fourthly, this alſo is lawful for caution and warning to a third perſon, that is in danger to be infected by the company, or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by repoſing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or ſuſpicion of his bad qualities: but even in this caſe we ought to take great care, that the ill character we give of any man be ſpread no farther than is neceſſary to the good end we deſigned in it.

Beſides theſe more obvious and remarkable caſes, this prohibition doth not I think hinder, but that in ordinary converſation men may mention that ill of others, which is already made as publick as it well can be: or that one friend may not in freedom ſpeak to another of the miſcarriage of a third perſon, where he is ſecure no ill uſe will be made of it, and that it will go no farther to his prejudice: provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or ſpeaking ill of others: and the leſs we do it, though without any malice or deſign of harm, ſtill the better; becauſe this ſhews that we do not feed upon ill reports, and take pleaſure in them.

Theſe are all the uſual caſes in which it may be neceſſary for us to ſpeak evil of other men. And theſe are ſo evidently reaſonable, that the prohibition in the text cannot with reaſon be extended to them. And if no man would allow himſelf to ſay any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in theſe and the like caſes, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the world would be very quiet. I proceed in the

III. IIId place, to conſider the evil of this practice, both in the cauſes and the conſequences of it.

Firſt,

SERM. XLII.

Firſt, we will conſider the cauſes of it. And it commonly ſprings from one or more of theſe evil roots.

Firſt, one of the deepeſt and moſt common cauſes of evil-ſpeaking is ill-nature and cruelty of diſpoſition: and by a general miſtake ill-nature paſſeth for wit, as cunning doth for wiſdom; though in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far diſtant as vice and virtue.

And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of mankind, than the general proneneſs of men to this vice. For (as our SAVIOUR ſays) "out of "the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh." And therefore men do commonly incline to the cenſorious and uncharitable ſide: which ſhews human nature to be ſtrangely diſtorted from it's original rectitude and innocency. The wit of man doth more naturally vent it ſelf in ſatire and cenſure, than in praiſe and panegyrick. When men ſet themſelves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and ſtraining; and if any thing be fitly ſaid in that kind, it doth hardly reliſh with moſt men: but in the way of invective, the invention of men is a plentiful and never-failing ſpring: and this kind of wit is not more eaſy than it is acceptable: it is greedily entertained and greatly applauded, and every man is glad to hear others abuſed, not conſidering how ſoon it may come to his own turn to lie down and make ſport for others,

To ſpeak evil of others, is almoſt become the general entertainment of all companies: and the great and ſerious buſineſs of moſt meetings and viſits, after the neceſſary ceremonies and compliments are over,

SERM. XLII.

ver, is to ſit down and back-bite all the world. 'Tis the ſauce of converſation, and all diſcourſe is counted but flat and dull which hath not ſomething of piquancy and ſharpneſs in it againſt ſomebody. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are ſecretly pleaſed with ill reports, and drink them in with greedineſs and delight: though at the ſame time they have ſo much juſtice, as to hate thoſe that propagate them; and ſo much wit, as to conclude that theſe very perſons will do the ſame for them in another place and company.

But eſpecially, if it concerns one of another party, and that differs from us in matters of religion; in this caſe, all parties ſeem to be agreed that they do GOD great ſervice in blaſting the reputation of their adverſaries: and though they all pretend to be Chriſtians, and the diſciples of him who taught nothing but kindneſs and meekneſs and charity; yet it is ſtrange to ſee with what a ſalvage and murderous diſpoſition they will fly at one another's reputation and tear it in pieces: and whatever other ſcruples they may have, they make none to beſpatter one another in the moſt bitter and ſlanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their adverſaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it? How many objections do they raiſe againſt it? and with what coldneſs do they at laſt admit it? It is very well, ſay they, if it be true. I ſhall be glad to hear it confirmed. I never heard ſo much good of him before. You are a good man yourſelf, but have a care you be not deceived.

Nay it is well, if to balance the matter, and ſet things even, they do not clap ſome infirmity and fault into

into the other ſcale, that ſo the enemy may not go off with flying colours. SERM. XLII.

But on the other ſide, every man is a good and ſubſtantial author of an ill report. I do not apply this to any one ſort of men, though all are to blame in this way; *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, & extra.* To ſpeak impartially, the zealots of all parties have got a ſcurvy trick of lying for the truth.

But of all ſorts of people, I have obſerved the prieſts and bigots of the church of Rome to be the ableſt in this way, and to have the ſtrongeſt faith for a luſty falſhood and calumny. Others will bandy a falſe report, and toſs it from one hand to another; but I never knew any that would ſo hug a lie and be ſo very fond of it. They ſeem to be deſcribed by St. John in that expreſſion in the revelation, "whoſoever loveth and maketh a lie."

Another ſhrewd ſign that ill-nature lies at the root of this vice is, that we eaſily forget the good that is ſaid of others, and ſeldom make mention of it; but the contrary ſticks with us, and lies uppermoſt in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occaſions: and which is yet more ill-natured and unjuſt, many times when we do not believe it our ſelves we tell it to others, with this charitable caution, that we hope it is not true: but in the mean time we give it our paſs, and venture it to take it's fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of thoſe into whoſe hands it comes.

Secondly, another cauſe of the commonneſs of this vice is, that many are ſo bad themſelves, in one kind or other. For to think and ſpeak ill of others is not only a bad thing, but a ſign of a bad man.

Our

SERM. XLII.

Our bleſſed SAVIOUR, ſpeaking of the evil of the laſt days, gives this as the reaſon of the great decay of charity among men; "becauſe iniquity ſhall a-bound, the love of many ſhall wax cold." When men are bad themſelves, they are glad of any opportunity to cenſure others, and are always apt to ſuſpect that evil of other men which they know by themſelves. They cannot have a good opinion of themſelves, and therefore are very unwilling to have ſo of any body elſe; and for this reaſon they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be ſome juſtification of them if they can but render others as bad as themſelves.

Mat. xxiv. 12.

Thirdly, another ſource of this vice is malice and revenge. When men are in heat and paſſion they do not conſider what is true, but what is ſpightful and miſchievous; and ſpeak evil of others in revenge of ſome injury which they have received from them: and when they are blinded by their paſſions, they lay about them madly and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they ſpeak be true or not. Nay many are ſo deviliſh, as to invent and raiſe falſe reports on purpoſe to blaſt men's reputation. This is a diabolical temper, and therefore St. James tells us that the ſlanderous "tongue is ſet on fire of hell:" and the devil hath his very name from calumny and falſe accuſation; and it is his nature too, for he is always ready to ſtir up and foment this evil ſpirit among men: nay, the ſcripture tells us that he hath the malice and impudence to accuſe good men before GOD; as he did Job, charging him with hypocriſy to GOD himſelf; "who," he knows, "does know "the hearts of all the children of men."

Firſt,

SERM. XLII.

Fourthly, another cauſe of evil-ſpeaking is envy. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their reputation obſcures them, and that their commendable qualities do ſtand in their light; and therefore they do what they can to caſt a cloud over them, that the bright ſhining of their virtues may not ſcorch them. This makes them greedily to entertain, and induſtriouſly to publiſh any thing that may ſerve to that purpoſe, thereby to raiſe themſelves upon the ruins of other men's reputation: and therefore as ſoon as they have got an ill report of any good man by the end, to work they preſently go to ſend it abroad by the firſt poſt: for the ſtring is always ready upon their bow to let fly this arrow with an incredible ſwiftneſs, through city and country; for fear the innocent man's juſtification ſhould overtake it.

Fifthly, another cauſe of evil-ſpeaking is impertinence and curioſity; an itch of talking and medling in the affairs of other men, which do no wiſe concern them. Some perſons love to mingle themſelves in all buſineſs, and are loth to ſeem ignorant of ſo important a piece of news as the faults and follies of men, or any bad thing that is talked of in good company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill ſtories, as good matter of diſcourſe in the next company that is worthy of them: and this perhaps not out of any great malice, but for want of ſomething better to talk of, and becauſe their parts lie chiefly that way.

Laſtly, men do this many times out of wantonneſs and for diverſion. So little do light and vain men conſider, that a man's reputation is too great and

SERM. XLII.

tender a concernment to be jeſted withal; and that a ſlanderous tongue "bites like a ſerpent, and wounds "like a ſword." For what can be more barbarous, next to ſporting with a man's life, than to play with his honour and reputation, which to ſome men is dearer to them than their lives?

It is a cruel pleaſure which ſome men take in worrying the reputation of others much better than themſelves; and this only to divert themſelves and the company. Solomon compares this ſort of men to diſtracted perſons; "as a madman," ſaith he, "who caſteth fire-brands, arrows, and death, ſo is "the man that deceiveth his neighbour;" the LXX render it, "ſo is the man that defameth his neigh-"bour, and ſaith, am I not in ſport?" Such, and ſo bad are the cauſes of this vice. I proceed to conſider, in the

Second place, the ordinary, but very pernicious conſequences and effects of it; both to others, and to our ſelves.

Firſt, to others; the parties I mean that are ſlandered. To them it is certainly a great injury, and commonly a high provocation, but always matter of no ſmall grief and trouble to them.

It is certainly a great injury, and if the evil which we ſay of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all poſſible reparation. And though we ſhould do our utmoſt endeavour afterwards towards their vindication, yet that makes but very little amends; becauſe the vindication ſeldom reacheth ſo far as the reproach, and becauſe commonly men are neither ſo forward to ſpread the vindication, nor is it ſo eaſily received after ill impreſſions

preſſions are once made. The ſolicitous vindication of a man's ſelf is, at the beſt, but an after-game; and for the moſt part a man had better ſit ſtill, than to run the hazard of making the matter worſe by playing it.

I will add one thing more, that it is an injury that deſcends to a man's children and poſterity; becauſe the good or ill name of the father is derived down to them; and many times the beſt thing he hath to leave them is the reputation of his unblemiſhed virtue and worth: and do we make no conſcience to rob his innocent children of the beſt part of this ſmall patrimony, and of all the kindneſs that would have been done them for their father's ſake, if his reputation had not been ſo undeſervedly ſtained? Is it no crime by the breath of our mouth at once to blaſt a man's reputation, and to ruin his children, perhaps to all poſterity? Can we make a jeſt of ſo ſerious a matter? Of an injury ſo very hard to be repented of as it ought, becauſe in ſuch a caſe no repentance will be acceptable without reſtitution, if it be in our power. And perhaps it will undo us in this world to make it; and if we do it not, will be our ruin in the other.

I will put the caſe at the beſt, that the matter of the ſlander is true; yet no man's reputation is conſiderably ſtained, though never ſo deſervedly, without great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds but the matter by paſſing through ſeveral hands is aggravated beyond truth, every one out of his bounty being apt to add ſomething to it.

But beſides the injury, it is commonly a very high provocation. And the conſequence of that

SERM. XLII.

may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and deſperate quarrels. This reaſon the wiſe ſon of Sirach gives why we ſhould defame no man: "whether it be," ſays he, "to a friend or "a foe, talk not of other men's lives. For he hath "heard and obſerved thee;" that is, one way or other it will probably come to his knowledge, "and "when the time cometh he will ſhew his hatred;" that is, he will take the firſt opportunity to revenge it.

Eccluſ. xix. 8, 9.

At the beſt, it is always matter of grief to the perſon that is defamed: and Chriſtianity, which is the beſt-natured inſtitution in the world, forbids us the doing of thoſe things whereby we may grieve one another. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there ſinks deep into the ſpirit even of a wiſe and good man: and the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more ſenſible is he of this hard uſage; becauſe he never treats others ſo, nor is he conſcious to himſelf that he hath deſerved it.

Secondly, the conſequences of this vice are as bad or worſe to our ſelves. Whoever is wont to ſpeak evil of others, gives a bad character of himſelf, even to thoſe whom he deſires to pleaſe; who, if they be wiſe enough, will conclude that he ſpeaks of them to others, as he does of others to them: and were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themſelves, no man could be ſo blind as not to ſee this.

And it is very well worthy of our conſideration, which our SAVIOUR ſays in this very caſe, that "with what meaſure we mete to others, it ſhall be "meaſured to us again;" and that many times "heaped up, and running over." For there is hardly

Mat. vii.

hardly any thing wherein mankind do uſe more ſtrict juſtice and equality; than "in rendering evil "for evil, and railing for railing." SERM. XLII.

Nay, revenge often goes further than words. A reproachful and ſlanderous ſpeech hath coſt many a man a duel, and in that the loſs of his own life, or the murther of another, perhaps with the loſs of his own ſoul: and I have often wondered that among Chriſtians this matter is no more laid to heart.

And though neither of theſe great miſchiefs ſhould happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways. For no man knows in the chance of things, and the mutability of human affairs, whoſe kindneſs and good-will he may come to ſtand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only conſult his own ſafety and quiet, he ought to refrain from evil-ſpeaking. "What man is he," ſaith the pſalmiſt, "that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he "may ſee good: keep thy tongue from evil, and "thy lips from ſpeaking falſhood." Pſalm xxxiv. 12, 13.

But there is an infinitely greater danger hanging over us from GOD. If we allow our ſelves in this evil practice, all our religion is good for nothing. So St. James expreſly tells us, "if any man among "you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his "tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's "religion is vain." And St. Paul puts ſlanderers and revilers amongſt thoſe that "ſhall not inherit the "kingdom of GOD." And our bleſſed SAVIOUR hath told us, that "by our words we ſhall be juſti-"fied, and by our words we ſhall be condemned." To which I will add the counſel given us by the wiſe-man, "refrain your tongue from back-biting, for Jam. i. 26. 1 Cor. vi. 10.

"there

SERM. XLII.

" there is no word ſo ſecret that ſhall go for nought, " and the mouth that ſlandereth ſlayeth the ſoul." I proceed in the

Wiſdom of Solomon, c. i. v. 11.

IVth place, to add ſome further arguments and conſiderations to take men off from this vice: as,

Firſt, that the uſe of ſpeech is a peculiar prerogative of man above other creatures, and beſtowed upon him for ſome excellent end and purpoſe: that by this faculty we might communicate our thoughts more eaſily to one another, and conſult together for our mutual comfort and benefit: not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The pſalmiſt, as by interpreters is generally thought, calls our "tongue" our "glory;" therewith we "praiſe GOD" and "bleſs men." Now to bleſs is to ſpeak well of any, and to wiſh them well. So that we pervert the uſe of ſpeech, and turn our glory into ſhame, when we abuſe this faculty to the injury and reproach of any.

Secondly, conſider how cheap a kindneſs it is to ſpeak well, at leaſt not to ſpeak ill of any. A good word is an eaſy obligation, but not to ſpeak ill requires only our ſilence, which coſts us nothing. Some inſtances of charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and neceſſities of others: the expence deters many from this kind of charity. But were a man never ſo covetous, he might afford another man his good word; at leaſt he might refrain from ſpeaking ill of him: eſpecially if it be conſidered how dear many have paid for a ſlanderous and reproachful word.

Thirdly, conſider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good-will of men, than to be free from this vice. Every one deſires ſuch a man's friendſhip, and is apt to repoſe a great truſt and confidence in him: and when he is dead, men will praiſe him; and next to piety towards GOD, and righteouſneſs to men, nothing is thought a more ſignificant commendation, than that he was never, or very rarely heard to ſpeak ill of any. It was a ſingular character of a Roman gentleman, *neſcivit quid eſſet maledicere*, "he knew not what it "was to give any man an ill word."

Fourthly, let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and conſider how himſelf is apt to be affected with this uſage. Speak thy conſcience man, and ſay whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldſt not be glad to have every man's, eſpecially every good man's good word? And to have thy faults concealed, and not to be hardly ſpoken of, though it may be not altogether without truth, by thoſe whom thou didſt never offend by word or deed? But with what face or reaſon doſt thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been ſo contrary? Nothing ſurely is more equal and reaſonable than that known rule, "what thou wouldſt have no man "do to thee, that do thou to no man."

Fifthly, when you are going to ſpeak reproachfully of others, conſider whether you do not lie open to juſt reproach in the ſame, or ſome other kind. Therefore give no occaſion, no example of this barbarous uſage of one another.

There are very few ſo innocent and free either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxi-

ous

SERM. XLII.

ous to reproach upon one account or other; even the wiſeſt, and moſt virtuous, and moſt perfect among men have ſome little vanity, or affectation, which lays them open to the raillery of a mimical and malicious wit: therefore we ſhould often turn our thoughts upon our ſelves, and look into that part of the wallet which men commonly fling over their ſhoulders and keep behind them, that they may not ſee their own faults: and when we have ſearched that well, let us remember our SAVIOUR's rule, "he that is without ſin, let him caſt the firſt "ſtone."

Laſtly conſider, that it is in many caſes as great a charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great neceſſity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not beſtow a ſmall alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent advice which the ſon of Sirach gives to this purpoſe; "talk not of other men's lives; if "thou haſt heard a word, let it die with thee; and "be bold it will not burſt thee." I ſhall in the

Eccluſ. xix. 10.

V. Vth and laſt place, give ſome rules and directions for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.

Firſt, never ſay any evil of any man, but what you certainly know. Whenever you poſitively accuſe and indite any man of any crime, though it be in private and among friends, ſpeak as if you were upon your oath, becauſe GOD ſees and hears you. This not only charity, but juſtice and regard to truth do demand of us. He that eaſily credits an ill report is almoſt as faulty as the firſt inventor of it.

For

SERM. XLII.

For though you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a lie. Therefore never ſpeak evil of any upon common fame, which for the moſt part is falſe, but almoſt always uncertain whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in moſt caſes, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be ſo: but if I cannot prevail to make men wholly to abſtain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with ſome perſons, and to gain this point of them however; becauſe it will retrench nine parts in ten of the evil-ſpeaking that is in the world.

Secondly, before you ſpeak evil of any man, conſider whether he hath not obliged you by ſome real kindneſs, and then it is a bad return to ſpeak ill of him who hath done us good. Conſider alſo, whether you may not come hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? And how will you then be aſhamed when you reflect upon it, and perhaps have reaſon alſo to believe that he to whom you have done this injury is not ignorant of it?

Conſider likewiſe, whether in the chance of human affairs, you may not ſome time or other come to ſtand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of yours towards him will render you of it? And whether it may not be in his power to revenge a ſpiteful and needleſs word by a ſhrewd turn? So that if a man made no conſcience of hurting others, yet he ſhould in prudence have ſome conſideration of himſelf.

SERM. XLII.

Thirdly, let us accuſtom our ſelves to pity the faults of men, and to be truly ſorry for them, and then we ſhall take no pleaſure in publiſhing them. And this common humanity requires of us, conſidering the great infirmities of human nature, and that we our ſelves alſo are liable to be tempted: conſidering likewiſe, how ſevere a puniſhment every fault and miſcarriage is to it ſelf; and how terribly it expoſeth a man to the wrath of GOD, both in this world and the other. He is not a good Chriſtian, that is not heartily ſorry for the faults even of his greateſt enemies; and if he be ſo, he will diſcover them no farther than is neceſſary to ſome good end.

Fourthly, whenever we hear any man evil-ſpoken of, if we know any good of him let us ſay that. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part to ſtand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuſe and beſpatter them. Poſſibly the good you have heard of them may not be true, but it is much more probable that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither: however, it is better to preſerve the credit of a bad man, than to ſtain the reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man ſhould be evil-ſpoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad qualities ſhould be mentioned together; otherwiſe he may be ſtrangely miſrepreſented, and an indifferent man may be made a monſter.

They that will obſerve nothing in a wiſe man, but his overſights and follies; nothing in a good man, but his failings and infirmities, may make a ſhift to render a very wiſe and good man very deſpicable. If one ſhould heap together all the paſſionate

ſionate ſpeeches, all the froward and imprudent actions of the beſt man; all that he had ſaid or done amiſs in his whole life, and preſent it all at one view, concealing his wiſdom and virtues; the man in this diſguiſe would look like a mad-man or a fury: and yet if his life were fairly repreſented, and juſt in the ſame manner it was led; and his many and great virtues ſet over againſt his failings and infirmities, he would appear to all the world to be an admirable and excellent perſon. But how many and great ſoever any man's ill qualities are, it is but juſt that with all this heavy load of faults he ſhould have the due praiſe of the few real virtues that are in him.

Fifthly, that you may not ſpeak ill of any, do not delight to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to buſy-bodies, and thoſe that love to talk of other men's faults: or if you cannot decently reprove them becauſe of their quality, then divert the diſcourſe ſome other way; or if you cannot do that, by ſeeming not to mind it, you may ſufficiently ſignify that you do not like it.

Sixthly, let every man mind himſelf, and his own duty and concernment. Do but endeavour in good earneſt to mend thy ſelf, and it will be work enough for one man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When Plato withdrew from the court of Dionyſius, who would fain have had a famous philoſopher for his flatterer, they parted in ſome unkindneſs, and Dionyſius bade him not to ſpeak ill of him when he was returned into Greece; Plato told him, "he had no leiſure for it;" meaning, that he had better things to mind, than to take up his

SERM. XLII.

thoughts and talk with the faults of ſo bad a man, ſo notoriouſly known to all the world.

Laſtly, let us ſet a watch before the door of our lips, and not ſpeak but upon conſideration: I do not mean to ſpeak finely, but fitly. Eſpecially when thou ſpeakeſt of others, conſider of whom, and what thou art going to ſpeak: uſe great caution and circumſpection in this matter: look well about thee; on every ſide of the thing, and on every perſon in the company, before thy words ſlip from thee; which when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not that men ſhould be ſullen in company, and ſay nothing; or ſo ſtiff in converſation, as to drop nothing but aphoriſms and oracles: eſpecially, among equals and friends, we ſhould not be ſo reſerved as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchſafe to ſay any thing. If a man had the underſtanding of an angel, he muſt be contented to abate ſomething of this exceſs of wiſdom, for fear of being thought cunning. The true art of converſation, if any body can hit upon it, ſeems to be this; an appearing freedom and openneſs, with a reſolute reſervedneſs as little appearing as is poſſible.

All that I mean by this caution is, that we ſhould conſider well what we ſay, eſpecially of others. And to this end we ſhould endeavour to get our minds furniſhed with matter of diſcourſe concerning things uſeful in themſelves, and not hurtful to others: and, if we have but a mind wiſe enough, and good enough, we may eaſily find a field large enough for innocent converſation; ſuch as will harm no body,

and

and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiſer part of mankind: and why ſhould any one be at the coſt of playing the fool to gratify any body whatſoever?

I have done with the five things I propounded to ſpeak to upon this argument. But becauſe hardly any thing can be ſo clear, but ſomething may be ſaid againſt it; nor any thing ſo bad, but ſomething may be pleaded in excuſe for it: I ſhall therefore take notice of two or three pleas that may be made for it.

Firſt, ſome pretend mighty injury and provocation. If in the ſame kind, it ſeems thou art ſenſible of it; and therefore thou of all men oughteſt to abſtain from it: but in what kind ſoever it be, the Chriſtian religion forbids revenge. Therefore do not plead one ſin in excuſe of another, and make revenge an apology for reviling.

Secondly, it is alledged by others, with a little better grace, that if this doctrine were practiſed, converſation would be ſpoiled, and there would not be matter enough for pleaſant diſcourſe and entertainment.

I anſwer, the deſign of this diſcourſe is to redreſs a great evil in converſation, and that I hope which mends it will not ſpoil it. And however, if men's tongues lay a little more ſtill, and moſt of us ſpake a good deal leſs than we do, both of our ſelves and others, I ſee no great harm in it: I hope we might for all that live comfortably and in good health, and ſee many good days. David, I am ſure, preſcribes it as an excellent receipt, in his opinion, for a quiet, and cheerful, and long life, to refrain from evil-

ſpeak-

SERM. XLII.

ſpeaking; "what man is he that deſireth life, and "loveth many days that he may ſee good? Keep "thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking "falſhood."

Pſal. xxxiv. 12, 13.

But granting that there is ſome pleaſure in invective, I hope there is a great deal more in innocence: and the more any man conſiders this, the truer he will find it; and whenever we are ſerious, we our ſelves cannot but acknowledge it. When a man examines himſelf impartially before the ſacrament, or is put in mind upon a death-bed to make reparation for injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind, and wiſh he had not done them. For this certainly is one neceſſary qualification for the bleſſed ſacrament, that we "be in love "and charity with our neighbours;" with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconſiſtent.

Thirdly, there is yet a more ſpecious plea than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill if they can eſcape the tongues of men; as they would do, if this doctrine did effectually take place: becauſe by this means one great reſtraint from doing evil would be taken away, which theſe good men, who are ſo bent upon reforming the world, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the diſpleaſure of GOD, will yet abſtain from doing bad things for fear of reproach from men: beſides, that this ſeems the moſt proper puniſhment of many faults which the laws of men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not ſeem ſo good and laudable a way to puniſh one fault by another: but let no man encourage himſelf in an evil

evil way with this hope, that he ſhall eſcape the cenſure of men: when I have ſaid all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-ſpeaking enough in the world to chaſtiſe them that do ill: and though we ſhould hold our peace, there will be bad tongues enow to reproach men with their evil doings. I wiſh we could but be perſuaded to make the experiment for a little while, whether men would not be ſufficiently laſhed for their faults, though we ſat by and ſaid nothing.

So that there is no need at all that good men ſhould be concerned in this odious work. There will always be offenders and malefactors enow to be the executioners to inflict this puniſhment upon one another. Therefore let no man preſume upon impunity on the one hand; and on the other, let no man deſpair but that this buſineſs will be ſufficiently done one way or other. I am very much miſtaken, if we may not ſafely truſt an ill-natured world that there will be no failure of juſtice in this kind.

And here, if I durſt, I would fain have ſaid a word or two concerning that more publick ſort of obloquy by lampoons and libels, ſo much in faſhion in this witty age. But I have no mind to provoke a very terrible ſort of men. Yet thus much I hope may be ſaid without offence, that how much ſoever men are pleaſed to ſee others abuſed in this kind, yet it is always grievous when it comes to their own turn: however I cannot but hope that every man that impartially conſiders, muſt own it to be a fault of a very high nature, to revile thoſe whom GOD hath placed in authority over us, and "to ſlander the "footſteps of the LORD's anointed:" eſpecially

SERM. XLII.

ſince it is ſo expreſly written, "thou ſhalt not ſpeak "evil of the rulers of thy people."

Having repreſented the great evil of this vice, it might not now be improper to ſay ſomething to thoſe who ſuffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil ſaid of us? Let us reform, and cut off all occaſions for the future; and ſo turn the malice of our enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making ſo good an uſe of it: and then it will be well for us to have been evil-ſpoken of.

Are we innocent? We may ſo much the better bear it patiently; imitating herein the pattern of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, "who when he was reviled, "reviled not again, but committed himſelf to him "that judgeth righteouſly."

We may conſider likewiſe, that though it be a misfortune to be evil-ſpoken of, it is their fault that do it, and not ours; and therefore ſhould not put us into paſſion: becauſe another man's being injurious to me is no good reaſon why I ſhould be uneaſy to my ſelf. We ſhould not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much leſs upon our ſelves. Let no man's provocation make thee loſe thy patience. Be not ſuch a fool, as to part with any one virtue, becauſe ſome men are ſo malicious as to endeavour to rob thee of the reputation of all the reſt. When men ſpeak ill of thee, do as Plato ſaid he would do in that caſe; "live ſo, "as that no body may believe them."

All that now remains is to reflect upon what hath been ſaid, and to urge you and my ſelf to do accordingly. For all is nothing, if we do not practiſe what we ſo plainly ſee to be our duty. Many are ſo taken up

SERM. XLII.

up with the deep points and myſteries of religion, that they never think of the common duties and offices of human life. But faith and a good life are ſo far from claſhing with one another, that the Chriſtian religion hath made them inſeparable. True faith is neceſſary in order to a good life, and a good life is the genuine product of a right belief; and therefore the one never ought to be preſſed to the prejudice of the other.

I foreſee what will be ſaid, becauſe I have heard it ſo often ſaid in the like caſe; that there is not one word of JESUS CHRIST in all this. No more is there in the text. And yet I hope that JESUS CHRIST is truly preached, whenever his will and laws, and the duties injoined by the Chriſtian religion, are inculcated upon us.

But ſome men are pleaſed to ſay, that this is mere morality: I anſwer, that this is ſcripture morality, and Chriſtian morality, and who hath any thing to ſay againſt that? Nay, I will go yet farther, that no man ought to pretend to believe the Chriſtian religion, who lives in the neglect of ſo plain a duty; and in the practice of a ſin ſo clearly condemned by it, as this of evil-ſpeaking is.

But becauſe "the word of GOD is quick and pow-" erful, and ſharper than a two edged ſword," yea ſharper than calumny it ſelf; and pierceth the very hearts and conſciences of men, laying us open to our ſelves, and convincing us of our more ſecret as well as our more viſible faults; I ſhall therefore at one view repreſent to you what is diſperſedly ſaid concerning this ſin in the holy word of GOD.

SERM. XLII.

And I have purpoſely reſerved this to the laſt, becauſe it is more perſuaſive and penetrating than any human diſcourſe. And to this end be pleaſed to conſider in what company the Holy Ghoſt doth uſually mention this ſin. There is ſcarce any black catalogue of ſins in the bible but we find this among them; in the company of the very worſt actions and moſt irregular paſſions of men. "Out of the heart," ſays our SAVIOUR, "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, falſe-witneſs, evil-ſpeakings." And the apoſtle ranks "back-biters" with "fornicators," and "murderers," and "haters of GOD;" and with thoſe of whom it is expreſly ſaid, that "they ſhall not inherit the kingdom of GOD."

Matt. xv. 19.

Rom. i. 29.

1 Cor. vi. 10.

And when he enumerates the ſins of the laſt times, "men," ſays he, "ſhall be lovers of themſelves, covetous, boaſters, evil-ſpeakers, without natural affection, perfidious, falſe accuſers," &c. And which is the ſtrangeſt of all, they who are ſaid to be guilty of theſe great vices and enormities are noted by the apoſtle to be great pretenders to religion; for ſo it follows in the next words, "having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof." So that it is no new thing for men to make a more than ordinary profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and yet at the ſame time to live in a moſt palpable contradiction to the precepts of that holy religion: as if any pretence to myſtery, and I know not what extraordinary attainments in the knowledge of CHRIST, could exempt men from obedience to his laws, and ſet them above the virtues of a good life.

2 Tim. iii. 2, 3.

And

SERM. XLII.

And now after all this, do we hardly think that to be a ſin, which is in ſcripture ſo frequently ranked with murther and adultery and the blackeſt crimes; ſuch as are inconſiſtent with the life and power of religion, and will certainly ſhut men out of the kingdom of GOD? Do we believe the bible to be the word of GOD? And can we allow our ſelves in the common practice of a ſin, than which there is hardly any fault of men's lives more frequently mentioned, more ſeverely reproved, and more odiouſly branded in that holy book?

Conſider ſeriouſly theſe texts. "Who ſhall abide "in thy tabernacle, who ſhall dwell in thy holy "hill? He that back-biteth not with his tongue, "nor taketh up a reproach againſt his neighbour." Have you never heard what our SAVIOUR ſays, that "of every idle word we muſt give an account in the "day of judgment;" that "by thy words thou "ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be "condemned?" What can be more ſevere than that of St. James? "If any man among you ſeem-"eth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, "that man's religion is vain. Pſal.xv.1.

To conclude: the ſin, which I have now warned men againſt, is plainly condemned by the word of GOD; and the duty which I have now been perſuading you to, is eaſy for every man to underſtand, not hard for any man, that can but reſolve to keep a good guard upon himſelf for ſome time, by the grace of GOD to practiſe; and moſt reaſonable for all men, but eſpecially for all Chriſtians, to obſerve. It is as eaſy as a reſolute ſilence upon juſt occaſion, as reaſonable as prudence and juſtice and charity,

SERM. XLII.

and the preſervation of peace and good-will among men, can make it; and of as neceſſary and indiſpenſable an obligation, as the authority of GOD can render any thing.

Upon all which conſiderations let every one of us be perſuaded to take up David's deliberate reſolution, "I ſaid, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend "not with my tongue," And I do verily believe, that would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one fault, we ſhould ſoon be better men in our whole lives: I mean, that the correcting of this vice, together with thoſe that are nearly allied to it, and may at the ſame time, and almoſt with the ſame reſolution and care be corrected, would make us owners of a great many conſiderable virtues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection; it being hardly to be imagined that a man that makes conſcience of his words ſhould not take an equal or a greater care of his actions. And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reaſon of that ſaying of St. James, and with which I ſhall conclude: "if any "man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect "man."

Pſal. xxxix. 1.

"Now the GOD of peace, who brought again "from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the "great ſhepherd of the ſheep, through the "blood of the everlaſting covenant, make you "perfect in every good word and work, to do "his will; working in you always that which "is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through JESUS "CHRIST;" to whom be glory for ever, Amen.

THE DIVINITY AND INCARNATION OF OUR Bleſſed SAVIOUR.

AN

Advertiſement

TO THE

READER.

THE following ſermons were preached ſeveral years ago, in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry in London; and being now reviſed and enlarged by the author are here made publick: the true reaſon whereof, was not that which is commonly alledged for printing books, the importunity of friends; but the importunate clamours and malicious calumnies of others, whom the author heartily prays GOD *to forgive, and to give them better minds: and to grant that the enſuing diſcourſes, the publication whereof was in ſo great a degree neceſſary, may by his bleſſing prove in ſome meaſure uſeful.*

SER-

SERMON XLIII.

Concerning the divinity of our bleſſed SAVIOUR.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jury, December 30, 1679.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made fleſh, and dwelt amongſt us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

SERM. XLIII.

THESE words contain in them three great points concerning our bleſſed SAVIOUR, the author and founder of our faith and religion.

Firſt, his incarnation, "the Word was made," or became, "fleſh."

Secondly, his life and converſation here among us, "and dwelt among us," εσκηνώσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, he pitched his tabernacle among us; he lived here below in this world, and for a time made his reſidence and abode with us.

Thirdly, that in this ſtate of his humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his divinity; whilſt he appeared as a man and lived amongſt us, there were great and glorious teſtimonies given of him that he was the Son of GOD: and that in ſo peculiar a manner as no creature can be ſaid to be: "and we "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begot- "ten of the Father, &c." I ſhall

SERM. XLIII.

I ſhall begin with the firſt of theſe, his incarnation; as moſt proper for this ſolemn time, which hath for many ages been ſet apart for the commemoration of the nativity and incarnation of our bleſſed SAVIOUR: "the Word was made fleſh," that is, he who is perſonally called the Word, and whom the evangeliſt St. John had ſo fully deſcribed in the beginning of this goſpel, he became fleſh, that is, aſſumed our nature and became man; for ſo the word fleſh is frequently uſed in ſcripture for man or human nature: "O thou that heareſt prayer, unto "thee ſhall all fleſh come," that is, to thee ſhall all men addreſs their ſupplications: again, "the glory "of the LORD ſhall be revealed, and all fleſh ſhall "ſee it together", that is, all men ſhall behold and acknowledge it; and then it follows, "all fleſh "is graſs," ſpeaking of the frailty and mortality of man: and ſo likewiſe in the new teſtament, our bleſſed SAVIOUR foretelling the miſery that was coming upon the Jewiſh nation, ſays, "except "thoſe days ſhould be ſhortned no fleſh ſhould be "ſaved," that is, no man ſhould eſcape and ſurvive that great calamity and deſtruction which was coming upon them: "by the works of the law," ſays the apoſtle, "ſhall no fleſh," that is, no man "be "juſtified."

Pſal. lxv. 2.

Iſa. xl. 5. 6.

Mat. xxiv. 22.

Gal. ii. 16.

So that by the Word's being made or becoming fleſh, the evangeliſt did not intend that he aſſumed only a human body without a ſoul, and was united only to a human body, which was the hereſy of Apollinaris, and his followers, but that he became man, that is, aſſumed the whole human nature, body and ſoul. And it is likewiſe very probable that

that the evangelist did purposely chuse the word flesh, which signifies the frail and mortal part of man, to denote to us that the Son of GOD did assume our nature with all it's infirmities, and became subject to the common frailty and mortality of human nature. SERM. XLIII.

The words thus explained contain that "great my-"stery of godliness," as the apostle calls it, or of the Christian religion, viz. the incarnation of the Son of GOD, which St. Paul expresseth by the appearance or manifestation of GOD in the flesh, "and without "controversy great is the mystery of godliness, "GOD was manifested in the flesh," that is, he appeared in human nature, he became man; or, as St. John expresseth it in the text, "the Word was "made flesh." 1 Tim. iii. 16.

But for the more clear and full explication of these words, we will consider these two things.

First, the person that is here spoken of, and who is said to be incarnate or to be "made flesh," namely "the Word."

Secondly, the mystery it self, or the nature of this incarnation, so far as the scripture hath revealed and declared it to us.

I. We will consider the person that is here spoken of, and who is said to be incarnate or to be "made "flesh," and who is so frequently in this chapter called by the name or title of the Word; namely the eternal and only begotten Son of GOD; for so we find him described in the text. "The Word was made "flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we beheld his "glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the "Father, I.

SERM. XLIII.

" Father, &c." that is, such as became so great and glorious a person as deserves the title of " the only " begotten Son of GOD."

For the explaining of this name or title of the Word, given by St. John to our blessed SAVIOUR, we will consider these two things.

First, the reason of this name or title of the Word, and what probably might be the occasion why this evangelist insists so much upon it, and makes so frequent mention of it.

Secondly, the description it self, which is given of him under this name or title of the Word by this evangelist, in his entrance into his history of the gospel.

1. We will enquire into the reason of this name or title of the Word, which is here given to our blessed SAVIOUR by this evangelist: and what might probably be the occasion why he insists so much upon it and makes so frequent mention of it. I shall consider these two things distinctly and severally.

First, the reason of this name or title of the Word, here given by the evangelist to our blessed SAVIOUR. And he seems to have done it in compliance with the common way of speaking among the Jews, who frequently call the Messias by the name of " the " Word of the LORD;" of which I might give many instances: but there is one very remarkable, in the Targum of Jonathan, which renders those words of the psalmist, which the Jews acknowledge to be spoken of the Messias, viz. " the LORD said unto " my LORD, sit thou on my right hand, &c." I say it renders them thus, " the LORD said unto his Word

" Word, ſit thou on my right hand &c." And ſo likewiſe Philo the Jew calls him " by whom GOD " made the world, the Word of GOD," and " the " Son of GOD." And Plato probably had the ſame notion from the Jews, which made Amelius the Platoniſt, when he read the beginning of St. John's goſpel, to ſay, " this Barbarian agrees with Plato, " ranking the Word in the order of principles;" meaning that he made the Word the principle or efficient cauſe of the world, as Plato alſo hath done. SERM. XLIII.

And this title of the Word was ſo famouſly known to be given to the Meſſias, that even the enemies of Chriſtianity took notice of it. Julian the apoſtate calls CHRIST by this name: and Mahomet in his alchoran gives this name of the Word to JESUS the ſon of Mary. But St. John had probably no reference to Plato, any otherwiſe than as the Gnoſticks, againſt whom he wrote, made uſe of ſeveral of Plato's words and notions. So that in all probability St. John gives our bleſſed SAVIOUR this title with regard to the Jews more eſpecially, who anciently called the Meſſias by this name.

2dly, we will in the next place conſider, what might probably be the occaſion why this evangeliſt makes ſo frequent mention of this title of the Word, and inſiſts ſo much upon it. And it ſeems to be this: nay, I think that hardly any doubt can be made of it, ſince the moſt ancient of the fathers, who lived neareſt the time of St. John, do confirm it to us.

St. John, who ſurvived all the apoſtles, lived to ſee thoſe hereſies which ſprang up in the beginnings of Chriſtianity, during the lives of the apoſtles,

SERM. XLIII.

grown up to a great height, to the great prejudice and disturbance of the Christian religion: I mean the heresies of Ebion and Cerinthus, and the several sects of the Gnosticks which began from Simon Magus, and were continued and carried on by Valentinus and Basilides, Carpocrates and Menander: some of which expressly denied the divinity of our SAVIOUR, asserting him to have been a mere man, and to have had no manner of existence before he was born of the blessed virgin, as Eusebius and Epiphanius tell us particularly concerning Ebion: which those who hold the same opinion now in our days, may do well to consider from whence it had it's original.

Others of them, I still mean the Gnosticks, had corrupted the simplicity of the Christian doctrine by mingling with it the fancies and conceits of the Jewish cabbalists, and of the schools of Pythagoras and Plato, and of the Chaldean philosophy, more ancient than either; as may be seen in Eusebius *de præparat evang.* and by jumbling all these together they had framed a confused genealogy of deities, which they called by several glorious names, and all of them by the general name of Æons or Ages: among which they reckoned Ζωὴ, and Λόγος, and Μονογενὴς, and Πλήρωμα, that is, the Life, and the Word and the Only begotten, and the Fulness, and many other divine powers and emanations which they fancied to be successively derived from one another.

And they also distinguished between the maker of the world whom they called the GOD of the old testament, and the GOD of the new: and between JESUS and CHRIST: JESUS according to the doctrine

of Cerinthus, as Irenæus tells us, being the man that was born of the virgin, and CHRIST or the Meſſias being that divine power or Spirit which afterwards deſcended into JESUS and dwelt in him.

If it were poſſible, yet it would be to no purpoſe, to go about to reconcile theſe wild conceits with one another; and to find out for what reaſon they were invented, unleſs it were to amuſe the people with theſe "high ſwelling words of vanity" and a pretence of "knowledge falſly ſo called," as the apoſtle ſpeaks in alluſion to the name of Gnoſticks, that is to ſay, the men of knowledge, which they proudly aſſumed to themſelves, as if the knowledge of myſteries of a more ſublime nature did peculiarly belong to them.

In oppoſition to all theſe vain and groundleſs conceits, St. John in the beginning of his goſpel chuſes to ſpeak of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, the hiſtory of whoſe life and death he was going to write, by the name or title of the Word, a term very famous among thoſe ſects: and ſhews that this Word of GOD, which was alſo the title the Jews anciently gave to the Meſſias, did exiſt before he aſſumed a human nature, and even from all eternity: and that to this eternal Word did truly belong all thoſe titles which they kept ſuch a canting ſtir about, and which they did with ſo much ſenſleſs nicety and ſubtilty diſtinguiſh from one another, as if they had been ſo many ſeveral emanations from the deity: and he ſhews that this Word of GOD was really and truly the life, and the light, and the fulneſs, and the "only begotten of the Fa-"ther;" v. 5. "In him was the life, and the life "was the light of men;" and v. 6. "and the light "ſhineth

SERM. XLIII.

" ſhineth in darkneſs, and the darkeneſs compre-
" hended it not:" and v. 7, 8, 9. where the evangeliſt ſpeaking of John the Baptiſt, ſays of him, that " he came for a witneſs, to bear witneſs of the light; and that " he was not that light, but was ſent to " bear witneſs of that light: and that light was the " true light which coming into the world enlight-
" ens every man:" and v. 14. " and we beheld his " glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Fa-
" ther, full of grace and truth:" and v. 16. " And " of his fulneſs we all receive, &c." You ſee here is a perpetual alluſion to the glorious titles which they gave to their Æons, as if they had been ſo many ſeveral deities.

In ſhort, the evangeliſt ſhews that all this fanciful genealogy of divine emanations, with which the Gnoſticks made ſo great a noiſe, was mere conceit and imagination; and that all theſe glorious titles did really meet in the Meſſias who is the Word, and who before his incarnation was from all eternity with GOD, partaker of his divine nature and glory.

I have declared this the more fully and particularly, becauſe the knowledge of it ſeems to me to be the only true key to the interpretation of this diſcourſe of St. John concerning our SAVIOUR under the name and title of the Word. And ſurely it is a quite wrong way for any man to go about by the mere ſtrength and ſubtilty of his reaſon and wit, though never ſo great, to interpret an ancient book, without underſtanding and conſidering the hiſtorical occaſion of it, which is the only thing that can give true light to it.

And

SERM. XLIII.

And this was the great and fatal miſtake of Socinus, to go to interpret ſcripture merely by criticiſing upon words, and ſearching into all the ſenſes that they are poſſibly capable of, till he can find one, though never ſo forced and foreign, that will ſave harmleſs the opinion, which he was before-hand reſolved to maintain, even againſt the moſt natural and obvious ſenſe of the text which he undertakes to interpret: juſt as if a man ſhould interpret ancient ſtatutes and records by mere critical ſkill in words, without regard to the true occaſion upon which thy were made, and without any manner of knowledge and inſight into the hiſtory of the age in which they were written.

I ſhall now proceed to the ſecond thing which I propoſed to conſider, namely,

II. The deſcription here given of the Word by this evangeliſt in his entrance into his hiſtory of the goſpel. "In the beginning," ſays he, "was the Word, "and the Word was with GOD, and the Word was "GOD: the ſame was in the beginning with GOD: all "things were made by him, and without him was "not any thing made that was made." II.

In which paſſage of the evangeliſt four things are ſaid of the Word which will require a more particular explication.

Firſt, that "he was in the beginning."

Secondly, that "he was in the beginning with "GOD."

Thirdly, that "he was GOD."

Fourthly, that "all were made by him."

1ſt, That "he was in the beginning," ἐν ἀρχῇ, which is the ſame with ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, "from the begin- "ning." 1 John. i. 1.

SERM. XLIII.

" ning," where ſpeaking of CHRIST by the name of " eternal life," and of the " Word of life," " that," ſays he, " which was from the beginning." Nonnus, the ancient paraphraſt of St. John's goſpel, by way of explication of what is meant by his being " in the " beginning," adds, that he was ἄχρονος, without time, that is, before all time; and if ſo, then he was from all eternity: " in the beginning was the Word," that is, when things began to be made he was; not then began to be, but then already was, and did exiſt before any thing was made; and conſequently is without beginning, for that which was never made could have no beginning of it's being: and ſo the Jews uſed to deſcribe eternity, " before the world was," and " before the foundation of the world," as alſo in ſeveral places of the new teſtament. And ſo likewiſe Solomon deſcribes the eternity of wiſdom,

Prov. viii. 22, 23, &c.

" the LORD," ſays he, " poſſeſſed me in the beginning " of his way, before his works of old: I was ſet up " from everlaſting, from the beginning, or ever the " earth was: when he prepared the heavens I was " there; then I was with him as one brought up " with him, rejoicing always before him:" and ſo Juſtin Martyr explains this very expreſſion of St. John, that he was, or had a being before all ages: ſo likewiſe Athenagoras, a moſt ancient Chriſtian writer, " GOD," ſays he, " who is an inviſible mind, " had from the beginning the Word in himſelf."

2dly, That " in the beginning the Word was with " GOD:" and ſo Solomon, when he would expreſs the eternity of wiſdom, ſays, " it was with GOD:" And ſo likewiſe the ſon of Sirach ſpeaking of wiſdom, ſays, it was μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, with GOD: and ſo the ancient Jews

Jews often called the "Word of GOD," the "Word "which is before the LORD," that is, with him, or in his preſence: in like manner the evangeliſt ſays here, that the "Word was with GOD," that is, it was always together with him, partaking of his happineſs and glory: to which our SAVIOUR refers in his prayer, "glorify me with thine own ſelf with "the glory which I had with thee before the world "was." And this "being with GOD" the evangeliſt oppoſeth to his appearing and "being mani-"feſted" to the world, v. 10. "he was in the world, "and the world was made by him, and the world "knew him not;" that is, he, who from all eternity was "with GOD," appeared in the world, and when he did ſo, though he had made the world, yet the world would not own him. And this oppoſition between his "being with GOD" and his "being mani-"feſted" in the world, the ſame St. John mentions elſewhere, "I ſhew unto you that eternal life which "was with the Father, and was manifeſted unto us." John xvii. 5. 1 John i. 2.

3dly, That "he was GOD:" and ſo Juſtin Martyr ſays of him, that "he was GOD before the world," that is, from all eternity: but then the evangeliſt adds by way of explication, "the ſame was in the "beginning with GOD," that is, though the Word was truly and really GOD, yet he was not "GOD the "Father," who is the fountain of the deity, but an emanation from him, the only begotten Son of GOD, from all eternity with him; to denote to us, that which is commonly called by divines, and for any thing I could ever ſee properly enough, the diſtinction of perſons in the deity; at leaſt we know not a fitter word whereby to expreſs that great myſtery.

5.

SERM. XLIII.

4thly, That "all things were made by him." This seems to refer to the description which Moses makes of the creation, where GOD is represented creating things by his Word, "GOD said, let there "be light, and there was light:" and so likewise the psalmist, "by the Word of the LORD were the "heavens made, and all the host of them by the "breath of his mouth:" and so St. Peter also expresseth the creation of the world, "by the Word of "the LORD the heavens were of old, and the earth "made out of water:" and in the ancient books of the Chaldeans and the verses ascribed to Orpheus, the "maker of the world" is called the Word, and the divine Word: and so Tertullian tells the pagans, that by their philosophers the "maker of the world "was called Λόγος, the Word, or Reason:" and Philo the Jew, following Plato, who himself most probably had it from the Jews, says, that the world was created by the Word; whom he calls the "name "of GOD," and the "image of GOD," and the "Son of GOD;" two of which glorious titles are ascribed to him, together with that of "maker "of the world," by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews; "in these last days," says he, "GOD "hath spoken to us by his Son, by whom al-"so he made the worlds: who is the bright-"ness of his glory, and the express image of his "person:" and to the same purpose St. Paul, speaking of CHRIST, calls him "the image of the "invisible GOD, the first-born of every creature;" that is, born before any thing was created, as does evidently follow from the reason given in the next words why he called him the "first-born of every "creature,

Gen. i.

Psal. xxxiii. 6.

2 Pet. iii. 5.

Colos. i. 15. 16, 17.

" creature, for by him were all things created " that are in heaven and in earth, viſible and in- " viſible; all things were created by him and for " him, and he is before all things, and by him all " things ſubſiſt:" From whence it is plain, that by his being " the firſt-born of every creature" thus much at leaſt is to be underſtood, that he was before all creatures, and therefore he himſelf cannot be a creature, unleſs he could be before himſelf: nay the apoſtle ſays it expreſly in this very text in which he is called the " firſt-born of every creature," or " of " the whole creation," that " he is before all things;" that is, he had a being before there was any created being, he was before all creatures both in duration and in dignity; for ſo muſt he of neceſſity be, if " all things were made by him;" for as the maker is always before the thing which is made, ſo is he alſo better and of greater dignity.

And yet I muſt acknowledge that there ſeems to be no ſmall difficulty in the interpretation I have given of this expreſſion, in which CHRIST is ſaid by the apoſtle to be " the firſt-born of every creature," or of the whole creation; becauſe in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech the firſt-born is of the ſame nature with thoſe in reſpect of whom he is ſaid to be the firſt-born: and if ſo, then he muſt be a creature as well as thoſe in reſpect of whom he is ſaid to be the firſt-born. This is the objection in it's full ſtrength, and I do own it to have a very plauſible appearance: and yet I hope before I have done, to ſatisfy any one that will conſider things impartially and without prejudice, and will duly attend to the ſcope of the apoſtle's reaſoning in this text, and compare it with other parallel places

SERM. XLIII.

of the new teſtament, that it neither is, nor can be the apoſtle's meaning in affirming CHRIST to be the "firſt-born of every creature", to inſinuate that the Son of GOD is a creature.

For how can this poſſibly agree with that which follows and is given as the reaſon why CHRIST is ſaid to be the "firſt-born of every creature?" namely, becauſe "all things were made by him:" the apoſtle's words are theſe, "the firſt-born of every "creature," or, of the whole creation, "for by him "all things were created:" but now, according to the Socinian interpretation, this would be a reaſon juſt the contrary way: for if "all things were creat- "ed by him," then he himſelf is not a creature.

So that the apoſtle's meaning in this expreſſion muſt either be that the Son of GOD, our bleſſed SAVIOUR, was before all creatures, as it is ſaid preſently after that "he is before all things;" and then the reaſon which is added will be very proper and pertinent, "he is before all things" becauſe "all things "were created by him:" in which ſenſe it is very probable that the Son of GOD elſewhere calls himſelf "the beginning of the creation of GOD," meaning by it, as the philoſophers moſt frequently uſe the word ἀρχὴ, the principle or efficient cauſe of the creation: and ſo we find the ſame word, which our tranſlation renders the beginning, uſed together with the word firſt-born, as if they were of the ſame importance; "the beginning and firſt-born from the "dead," that is, the principle and efficient cauſe of the reſurrection of the dead.

Rev. iii. 14.

Col. i. 18.

Or elſe, which ſeems to me to be the moſt probable, and indeed the true meaning of the expreſſion,

by

SERM. XLIII.

by this title of "the firſt-born of every creature," the apoſtle means, that he was lord and heir of the creation: for the firſt-born is natural heir, and Juſtinian tells us, that heir did anciently ſignify lord: and therefore the ſcripture uſes theſe terms promiſcuouſly, and as if they were equivalent; for whereas St. Peter ſays of JESUS CHRIST, that "he is "lord of all," St. Paul calls him "heir of all "things:" and then the reaſon given by the apoſtle why he calls him "the firſt-born of every crea-"ture" will be very fit and proper, becauſe "all "things were created by him:" for well may he be ſaid to be lord and heir of the creation who "made all things that were made, and without "whom was not any thing made that was made."

Acts x. 36. Rom. iv. 13.

And this will yet appear much more evident, if we conſider, that the apoſtle to the Hebrews, (who, by ſeveral of the ancients, was thought to be St. Paul, where he gives to CHRIST ſome of the very ſame titles which St. Paul in his epiſtle to the Coloſſians had done, calling him, the "image of GOD," and the "maker of the world,)" does, inſtead of the title of the "firſt-born of every creature", call him "the "heir of all things;" and then adds, as the reaſon of this title, that by him GOD made the worlds, "GOD," ſays he, "hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us "by his Son, whom he hath conſtituted heir of "all things: who being the brightneſs of his glo-"ry, and the expreſs image of his perſon, and up-"holding all things by the Word of his power, &c." Which is exactly parallel with that paſſage of St. Paul to the Coloſſians, where CHRIST is called "the "image of the inviſible GOD," and where it is likewiſe

SERM. XLIII.

wiſe ſaid of him, that "he made all things," and that "by him all things do ſubſiſt," which the apoſtle to the Hebrews, in different words, but to the very ſame ſenſe, expreſſeth by his "upholding all things by the "Word of his power, that is, by the ſame powerful Word by which all things at firſt were made: but then inſtead of calling him "the firſt-born of "every creature," becauſe "all things were made "by him," he calls him the "heir of all things, "by whom God alſo made the worlds."

And indeed that expreſſion of "the firſt-born of "every creature" cannot admit of any other ſenſe which will agree ſo well with the reaſon that follows as the ſenſe which I have mentioned; namely, that he is therefore "heir and lord of the whole crea-"tion," becauſe "all creatures were made" by him; which exactly anſwers thoſe words of the apoſtle to the Hebrews, "whom he hath conſtituted heir of "all things, by whom alſo he made the worlds."

And now I appeal to any ſober and conſiderate man, whether the interpretation which I have given of that expreſſion of the "firſt-born of every crea-"ture" be not much more agreeable both to the tenour of the ſcripture, and to the plain ſcope and deſign of the apoſtle's argument and reaſoning in that text.

I have inſiſted the longer upon this, becauſe it is the great text upon which the Arians lay the main ſtrength and ſtreſs of their opinion that the Son of God is a creature, becauſe he is ſaid by the apoſtle to be "the firſt-born of every creature;" by which expreſſion, if no more be meant than that he is heir and lord of the whole creation, which I have ſhew-

ed

ed to be very agreeable both to the uſe of the word firſt-born among the Hebrews, and likewiſe to the deſcription given of CHRIST in that parallel text which I cited out of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, then this expreſſion of "the firſt-born of every creature" is nothing at all to the purpoſe either of the Arians or the Socinians, to prove the Son of GOD to be a creature: beſides, that the interpretation which I have given of it makes the apoſtle's ſenſe much more current and eaſy; for then the text will run thus, "who is the image of the inviſible GOD, heir and "lord of the whole creation, for by him all things "were made."

So that in theſe four expreſſions of the evangeliſt which I have explained, there are theſe four things diſtinctly affirmed of the Word.

Firſt, that "he was in the beginning," that is, that he already was and did exiſt when things began to be created: he was before any thing was made, and conſequently is without any beginning of time; for that which was never made could have no beginning of it's being.

Secondly, that in that ſtate of his exiſtence before the creation of the world he was partaker of the divine glory and happineſs. And this I have ſhewed to be the meaning of that expreſſion, "and the Word "was with GOD:" for thus our bleſſed SAVIOUR does explain his being with GOD before the world was, "and now, O Father, glorify me with thy own "ſelf, with the glory which I had with thee before "the world was.

Thirdly, that "he was GOD; and the Word was "GOD." Not "GOD the Father," who is the prin-

SERM. XLIII.

ciple and fountain of the deity: to prevent that miſtake, after he had ſaid that "the Word was GOD," he immediately adds in the next verſe, "the ſame "was in the beginning with GOD:" he was GOD by participation of the divine nature and happineſs together with the Father, and by way of derivation from him, as the light is from the ſun: which is the common illuſtration which the ancient fathers of the Chriſtian church give us of this myſtery, and is perhaps the beſt and fitteſt that can be given of it. For among finite beings it is not to be expected, becauſe not poſſible, to find any exact reſemblance of that which is infinite, and conſequently incomprehenſible; becauſe whatever is infinite is for that reaſon incomprehenſible by a finite underſtanding, which is too ſhort and ſhallow to meaſure that which is infinite; and whoever attempts it will ſoon find himſelf out of depth.

Fourthly, that "all things were made by him:" which could not have been more emphatically expreſſed than it is here by the evangeliſt, after the manner of the Hebrews, who when they would ſay a thing with the greateſt force and certainty, are wont to expreſs it both affirmatively and negatively; as, "he "ſhall live and not die," that is, he ſhall moſt aſſuredly live: ſo here, "all things were made by him, "and without him was not any thing made that "was made," that is, he made all creatures without exception, and conſequently he himſelf is not a creature, becauſe it is evidently impoſſible that any thing ſhould ever make it ſelf: but then if he be, and yet was never made, it is certainly true that he always was, even from all eternity.

All

SERM. XLIII.

All theſe aſſertions are plainly and expreſly contained in this deſcription which the evangeliſt St. John here makes of the Word; and this according to the interpretation of theſe expreſſions by the unanimous conſent of the moſt ancient writers of the Chriſtian church; who, ſome of them, had the advantage of receiving it from the immediate diſciples of St. John: which ſurely is no ſmall prejudice againſt any newly invented and contrary interpretation; as I ſhall hereafter more fully ſhew, when I come to conſider the ſtrange and extravagant interpretation which the Socinians make of this paſſage of St. John; which is plain enough of it ſelf, if they, under a pretence of explaining and making it more clear, had not diſturbed and darkened it.

Now from this deſcription, which the evangeliſt here gives of the Word, and which I have ſo largely explained in the foregoing diſcourſe, theſe three corollaries or concluſions do neceſſarily follow.

Firſt, that the Word here deſcribed by St. John is not a creature. This concluſion is directly againſt the Arians, who affirmed that the Son of GOD was a creature. They grant indeed that he is the firſt of all the creatures both in dignity and duration; for ſo they underſtand that expreſſion of the apoſtle wherein he is called "the firſt-born of every creature:" but this I have endeavoured already to ſhew not to be the meaning of that expreſſion.

They grant him indeed to have been GOD's agent or inſtrument in the creation of the world, and that all other creatures beſides himſelf were made by him: but ſtill they contend that he is a creature and was made: Now this cannot poſſibly conſiſt with what

SERM. XLIII.

St. John says of him, that "he was in the beginning," that is, as hath been already shewn, before any thing was made: and likewise, because he is said to have "made all things, and that without him "was not any thing made that was made;" and therefore he himself who made all things is necessarily excepted out of the condition or rank of a creature; as the apostle reasons in another case, "he "hath put all things under his feet: but when he "saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted who did put all things under him:" in like manner, "if by him all things "were made, and without him was not any thing "made that was made," then either he was not made, or he must make himself, which involves in it a plain contradiction.

Secondly, that this Word was from all eternity: for if "he was in the beginning," that is, before any thing was made, he must of necessity always have been; because whatever is, must either have been some time made, or must always have been; for that which was not, and afterwards is, must be made. And this will likewise follow from his being said to be GOD, and that in the most strict and proper sense, which doth necessarily imply his eternity, because GOD cannot begin to be, but must of necessity always have been.

Thirdly, from both these it will undeniably follow, that he had an existence before his incarnation, and his being born of the blessed virgin. For "if "he was in the beginning," that is, from all eternity, which I have shewn to be the meaning of that expression, then certainly he was before his being born of

the bleſſed virgin. And this likewiſe is implied in the propoſition in the text, " and the Word was " made fleſh." viz. that Word which the evangeliſt had before ſo gloriouſly deſcribed, that Word which " was in the beginning, and was with GOD, and " was GOD, and by whom all things were made;" I ſay, that Word was incarnate and aſſumed a human nature, and therefore muſt neceſſarily exiſt and have a being before he could aſſume humanity into an union with his divinity.

And this propoſition is directly levelled againſt the Socinians, who affirm our bleſſed SAVIOUR to be a mere man, and that he had no exiſtence before he was born of the virgin Mary his mother: which aſſertion of theirs doth perfectly contradict all the former concluſions which have been drawn from the deſcription here given by St. John of the Word: and their interpretation of this paſſage of St. John, applying it to the beginning of the publication of the goſpel, and to the new creation or reformation of the world by JESUS CHRIST, doth likewiſe contradict the interpretation of this paſſage conſtantly received, not only by the ancient fathers, but even by the general conſent of all Chriſtians for fifteen hundred years together, as I ſhall hereafter plainly ſhew: for to eſtabliſh this their opinion, that our bleſſed SAVIOUR was a mere man, and had no exiſtence before his birth, they are forced to interpret this whole paſſage in the beginning of St. John's goſpel quite to another ſenſe, never mentioned, nor I believe thought of by any Chriſtian writer whatſoever before Socinus: and it is not eaſy to imagine how any opinion can be loaded with a greater and heavier prejudice than this is.

SERM. XLIII.

And this I ſhould now take into conſideration, and ſhew, beſides the novelty of this interpretation, and the great violence and unreaſonableneſs of it, the utter inconſiſtency of it with other plain texts of the new teſtament.

But this is wholly matter of controverſy, and will require a large diſcourſe by it ſelf: I ſhall therefore wave the further proſecution of it at preſent, and apply my ſelf to that which is more practical and proper for the occaſion of this ſeaſon: ſo that at preſent I have done with the firſt thing contained in the firſt part of the text, viz. The perſon here ſpoken of, who is ſaid to be incarnate, namely the Word, it was "he that was made fleſh."

I ſhould then have proceeded to the ſecond thing which I propoſed to conſider, viz. The myſtery it ſelf, or the nature of this incarnation ſo far as the ſcripture hath revealed and declared it to us, namely, by aſſuming our nature in ſuch a manner as that the divinity became united to a human ſoul and body. But this I have already endeavoured in ſome meaſure to explain, and ſhall do it more fully in ſome of the following diſcourſes upon this text. I ſhall now only make a ſhort and uſeful reflection upon it with relation to the ſolemnity of this time.

And it ſhall be to ſtir us up to a thankful acknowledgment of the great love of GOD to mankind in the myſtery of our redemption by the incarnation of the Word, "the only begotten Son of GOD:" that he ſhould deign to have ſuch a regard to us in our low condition, and to take our caſe ſo much to heart as to think of redeeming and ſaving mankind from that depth of miſery into which we had plunged our ſelves;

ſelves; and to do this in ſo wonderful and aſtoniſhing a manner: that GOD ſhould employ his eternal and only begotten Son, who had been with him from all eternity, partaker of his happineſs and glory, and was "GOD of GOD," to ſave the ſons of men by ſo infinite and amazing a condeſcenſion: that GOD ſhould vouchſafe to become man, to reconcile man to GOD: that he ſhould come down from heaven to earth, to raiſe us from earth to heaven: that he ſhould aſſume our vile and frail and mortal nature, that he might clothe us with glory and honour and immortality: that he ſhould ſuffer death to ſave us from hell, and ſhed his blood to purchaſe eternal redemption for us.

For certainly the greater the perſon is that was employed in this merciful deſign, ſo much the greater is the condeſcenſion, and the love and goodneſs expreſſed in it ſo much the more admirable: that the Son of GOD ſhould ſtoop from the height of glory and happineſs to the loweſt degree of abaſement, and to the very depth of miſery for our ſakes, who were ſo mean and inconſiderable, ſo guilty and obnoxious to the ſeverity of his juſtice, ſo altogether unworthy of his grace and favour, and ſo very unwilling to receive it when it was ſo freely offered to us; for, as the evangeliſt here tells us, "he came "to his own, and his own received him not:" to his own creatures, and they did not own and acknowledge their maker; to his own nation and kindred, and they deſpiſed him and eſteemed him not. Lord! what is man, that GOD ſhould be ſo mindful of him; or the ſon of man, that the Son of GOD ſhould come down from heaven to viſit him,

in

in ſo much humility and condeſcenſion, and with ſo much kindneſs and compaſſion?

Bleſſed GOD and SAVIOUR of mankind! what ſhall we render to thee for ſuch mighty love, for ſuch ineſtimable benefits as thou haſt purchaſed for us, and art ready to confer upon us? What ſhall we ſay to thee, O thou preſerver and lover of ſouls, ſo often as we approach thy holy table, there to commemorate this mighty love of thine to us, and to partake of thoſe invaluable bleſſings which by thy precious bloodſhedding thou haſt obtained for us? ſo often as we there remember, that thou waſt pleaſed to aſſume our mortal nature, on purpoſe to live amongſt us for our inſtruction, and for our example, and to lay down thy life for the redemption of our ſouls, and for the expiation of our ſins; and to "take part of fleſh and blood" that thou mighteſt ſhed it for our ſakes: what affections ſhould theſe thoughts raiſe in us? What vows and reſolutions ſhould they engage us in, of perpetual love, and gratitude, and obedience to thee the moſt gracious and moſt glorious redeemer of mankind?

And with what religious ſolemnity ſhould we, more eſpecially at this time, celebrate the incarnation and birth of the Son of GOD, by giving praiſe and "glory to GOD in the higheſt," and by all poſſible demonſtration of charity and "good-will to men?" And as he was pleaſed to aſſume our nature, ſo ſhould we, eſpecially at this ſeaſon, "put on the LORD "JESUS CHRIST," that is, ſincerely embrace and practice his religion, "making no proviſion for the "fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof:" and now that the "ſun of righteouſneſs" is riſen upon the world, we ſhould

ſhould " walk as children of the light," and " de-
" mean our ſelves decently as in the day, not in ri-
" oting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and
" wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envy :" and ſhould be very careful not to abuſe our ſelves by ſin and ſenſuality, upon this very conſideration, that the Son hath put ſuch an honour and dignity upon us: we ſhould reverence that nature which GOD did not diſdain to aſſume and to inhabit here on earth, and in which he now gloriouſly reigns in heaven at the right hand of his Father; " to him be glory for
" ever and ever." Amen.

SERMON XLIV.

Concerning the divinity of our bleſſed SAVIOUR.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, January 6, 1679.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made fleſh.

SERM. XLIV.

I Proceed now to proſecute the third corollary or concluſion which does neceſſarily follow from the deſcription which St. John in the beginning of his goſpel gives of the Word, and which I have ſo largely explained in the foregoing diſcourſe: and it was this, That

SERM. XLIV.

That the Word, here described by the evangelist, had an existence before his incarnation, and his being born of the blessed virgin.

This assertion, I told you, is levelled directly against the Socinians, who affirm our blessed SAVIOUR to be a mere man, and deny that he had any existence before he was born of the virgin Mary his mother: which position of theirs does perfectly contradict all the former conclusions which have been so evidently drawn from the description here given of the Word: and not only so, but hath forced them to interpret this whole passage in the beginning of St. John's gospel in a very different sense from that which was constantly received, not only by the ancient fathers, but by the general consent of all Christians 1500 years together: for to establish this their opinion of our SAVIOUR's being a mere man, and having no existence before his birth, they have found it necessary to expound this whole passage quite to another sense, and such as by their own confession was never mentioned, nor, I believe, thought of by any Christian writer whatsoever before Socinus.

For this reason I shall very particularly consider the interpretation which Socinus gives of this passage of St. John; and besides the novelty of it, which they themselves acknowledge, I make no doubt very plainly to manifest the great violence and unreasonableness, and likewise the inconsistency of it with other plain texts of the new testament.

It is very evident what it was that forced Socinus to so strained and violent an interpretation of this passage of the evangelist, namely, that he plainly saw

ſaw how much the obvious, and natural, and generally received interpretation of this paſſage, in all ages of the Chriſtian church down to his time, ſtood in the way of his opinion, of CHRIST's being a mere man, which he was ſo fond of, and muſt of neceſſity have quitted, unleſs he would either have denied the divine authority of St. John's goſpel, or elſe could ſupplant the common interpretation of this paſſage by putting a quite different ſenſe upon it: which ſenſe he could find no way to ſupport without ſuch pitiful and wretched ſhifts, ſuch precarious and arbitrary ſuppoſitions, as a man of ſo ſharp a reaſon and judgment as Socinus, could not, I thought, have ever been driven to. But neceſſity hath no laws either of reaſon or modeſty; and he who is reſolved to maintain an opinion which he hath once taken up, muſt ſtick at nothing, but muſt break through all difficulties that ſtand in his way: and ſo the Socinians have here done, as will, I hope, manifeſtly appear in the following diſcourſe. SERM. XLIV.

They grant, that by the Word is here meant CHRIST, by whom GOD ſpake and declared his mind and will to the world; which they make to be the whole reaſon of that name or title of the Word which is here given him, and not becauſe by him GOD made the world: for the Word by which GOD made the world, they tell us, was nothing but the powerful command of GOD, and not a perſon who was deſigned to be the Meſſias. And becauſe, as I have ſhewed before, the ancient Jews do make frequent mention of this title of the "Word of GOD" by whom they ſay "GOD made the world," and do likewiſe apply this title to the Meſſias; therefore

5.

to avoid this, Schlictingius says, that the Chaldee paraphrasts, Jonathan and Onkelos, do sometimes put the "Word of GOD" for GOD, by a metonymy of the effect for the cause; but then he confidently denies that they do any where distinguish the Word of GOD from the person of GOD, as they acknowledge that St. John here does; nor do they, says he, understand by the "Word of GOD" the Messias, but on the contrary do oppose the "Word "of GOD" to the Messias: all which is most evidently confuted by that passage which I cited before out of the targum of Jonathan, who renders those words concerning the Messias, "the LORD said un- "to my LORD, &c." thus, "the LORD said unto "his Word, sit thou on my right hand, &c." where you see both that the "Word of GOD" is plainly distinguished from GOD, and that it is the Title given to the Messias; which are the two things which Schlictingius doth so confidently deny.

This then being agreed on all hands, that by the Word St. John means the Messias, I shall in the next place shew by what strained and forced arts of interpretation the Socinians endeavour to avoid the plain and necessary consequence from this passage of St. John, namely, that the Word had an existence before he was made flesh, and born of the blessed virgin his mother.

This then, in short, is the interpretation which they give of this passage, than which I think nothing can be more unnatural and violent.

"In the beginning:" this they will by no means have to refer to the creation of the world, but to the beginning of the gospel; that is, when the gospel

pel firſt began to be publiſhed; then was CHRIST, and not before: "and he was with GOD," that is, ſays Socinus, CHRIST as he was the "Word of "GOD," that is, the goſpel of CHRIST which was afterwards by him revealed to the world, was firſt only known to GOD: but all this being ſomewhat hard, firſt to underſtand by "the beginning" not the beginning of the world but of the goſpel; and then by the Word which "was with GOD," to underſtand the goſpel which before it was revealed was only known to GOD; they have upon ſecond thoughts found out another meaning of thoſe words, "and the Word was with GOD;" that is, ſaith Schlictingius, CHRIST was taken up by GOD into heaven, and there inſtructed in the mind and will of GOD, and from thence ſent down into the world again to declare it to mankind. SERM. XLIV.

"And the Word was GOD," that is, ſay they, CHRIST had the honour and title of GOD conferred upon him, as magiſtrates alſo have, who in the ſcripture are called gods: "he was GOD," not by nature but by office, and by divine conſtitution and appointment.

"All things were made by him:" this they will needs have to be meant of the renovation and reformation of the world by JESUS CHRIST, which is ſeveral times in ſcripture called a new creation.

This in ſhort is the ſum of their interpretation of this paſſage, which I ſhall now examine, and to which I ſhall oppoſe three things as ſo many invincible prejudices againſt it.

Firſt, That not only all the ancient fathers of the Chriſtian church, but ſo far as I can find, all inter-

SERM. XLIV.

preters whatſoever for fifteen hundred years together, did underſtand this paſſage of St. John in a quite different ſenſe, namely, of the creation of the material, and not of the renovation of the moral world: and I add farther, that the generality of Chriſtians did ſo underſtand this paſſage, as to collect from it, as an undoubted point of Chriſtianity, that the Word had a real exiſtence before he was born of the bleſſed virgin.

And thus not only the orthodox Chriſtians, but even the Arians, and Amelius the Platoniſt, who was a more indifferent judge than either of them, did underſtand this paſſage of St. John, without any thought of this invention that he ſpake not of the old, but of the new creation of the world by JESUS CHRIST, and the reformation of mankind by the preaching of the goſpel: which I dare ſay no indifferent reader of St. John, that had not been prepoſſeſſed and biaſſed by ſome violent prejudice, would ever have thought of.

And ſurely it ought to be very conſiderable in this caſe, that the moſt ancient Chriſtian writers, Ignatius, Juſtin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenæus, Tertullian, and even Origen himſelf, who is called the father of interpreters, are moſt expreſs and poſitive in this matter. For Ignatius was the ſcholar of Polycarp, who was a diſciple of St. John; and Juſtin Martyr lived in the next age to that of the apoſtles; and Origen was a man of infinite learning and reading, and in his comments upon ſcripture ſeems to have conſidered all the interpretations of thoſe that were before him. So that if this, which Socinus is ſo confident is the true ſenſe of St. John, had been any where extant,

tant, he would not probably have omitted it; nay rather would certainly have mentioned it, if for no other reaſon, yet for the ſurpriſing novelty and ſtrangeneſs of it, with which he was apt to be overmuch delighted. SERM. XLIV.

So that if this interpretation of Socinus be true, here are two things very wonderful, and almoſt incredible: firſt, that thoſe who lived ſo very near St. John's time, and were moſt likely to know his meaning, as Ignatius, Juſtin Martyr, &c. ſhould ſo widely miſtake it: and then, that the whole Chriſtian world ſhould for ſo many ages together be deceived in the ground and foundation of ſo important an article of faith, if it were true; or if it were not, ſhould be led into ſo groſs and dangerous an error as this muſt needs be, if CHRIST had no real exiſtence before he was born into the world: and which would be neceſſarily conſequent upon this, that no man did underſtand this paſſage of St. John aright before Socinus. This very conſideration alone, if there were no other, were ſufficient to ſtagger any prudent man's belief of this interpretation.

As to the novelty of it, Socinus himſelf makes no difficulty to own it; nay, he ſeems rather to rejoice and to applaud himſelf in it. Unhappy man! that was ſo wedded to his own opinion, that no objection, no difficulty could divorce him from it.

And for this I refer my ſelf to his preface to his explication of this firſt chapter of St. John's goſpel; where you ſhall find theſe words concerning the paſſage now in controverſy, *quorum verus ſenſus omnes prorſus, qui quidem extarent, explanatores latuiſſe*

tuisse videtur, " the true sense of which words," says he, " seems to have been hid from all the ex- " positors that ever were extant." And upon these words, v. 10. " He was in the world, and the " world was made by him," he hath this expression, *quid autem hoc loco sibi velit Johannes, à nemine quod sciam adhuc rectè expositum fuit*, " but what St. " John means in this place was never yet, that I know " of, by any man rightly explained:" and Schlictingius after him, with more confidence but much less decency, tells us, that concerning the meaning of those expressions, " in the beginning," and of those which follow concerning the Word, the ancient interpreters did *ab apostoli mente delirare*, went " so " far from the apostle's meaning as if they had rav'd " and been out of their wits:" which is so extravagantly said, and with so much contempt of those great and venerable names, who were the chief propagators of Christianity in the world, and to whom all ages do so justly pay a reverence, that nothing can be said in excuse of him, but only that it is not usual with him to fall into such rash and rude expressions. But the man was really pinched by so plain and pressing a text, and where reason is weak and blunt, passion must be whetted, the only weapon that is left when reason fails: and I always take it for granted, that no man is ever angry with his adversary, but for want of a better argument to support his cause.

And yet to do right to the writers on that side, I must own, that generally they are a pattern of the fair way of disputing, and of debating matters of religion without heat and unseemly reflections upon

their adverſaries, in the number of whom I did not expect that the primitive fathers of the Chriſtian church would have been reckoned by them. They generally argue matters with that temper and gravity, and with that freedom from paſſion and tranſport, which becomes a ſerious and weighty argument: and for the moſt part they reaſon cloſely and clearly, with extraordinary guard and caution, with great dexterity and decency, and yet with ſmartneſs and ſubtilty enough; with a very gentle heat, and few hard words: virtues to be praiſed where-ever they are found, yea even in an enemy, and very worthy our imitation: in a word, they are the ſtrongeſt managers of a weak cauſe and which is ill founded at the bottom, that perhaps ever yet medled with controverſy: inſomuch that ſome of the proteſtants and the generality of the popiſh writers, and even of the Jeſuits themſelves, who pretend to all the reaſon and ſubtilty in the world, are in compariſon of them but mere ſcolds and bunglers. Upon the whole matter, they have but this one great defect, that they want a good cauſe and truth on their ſide; which if they had, they have reaſon, and wit, and temper enough to defend it. SERM. XLIV.

But to return to the buſineſs. That which I urge them withal, and that from their own confeſſion, is this, that this interpretation of theirs is perfectly new, and unknown to the whole Chriſtian world before Socinus; and for that reaſon, in my opinion, not to be bragged of: becauſe it is in effect to ſay that the Chriſtian religion, in a point pretended on both ſides to be of the greateſt moment, was never rightly underſtood by any ſince the apoſtles days, for

fifteen

SERM. XLIV.

fifteen hundred years together: and which makes the matter yet worſe, that the religion which was particularly deſigned to overthrow polytheiſm and the belief of more gods, hath, according to them, been ſo ill taught and underſtood by Chriſtians for ſo many ages together, and almoſt from the very beginning of Chriſtianity, as does neceſſarily infer a plurality of gods: an inconvenience ſo great, as no cauſe, how plauſible ſoever it may otherwiſe appear, is able to ſtand under and to ſuſtain the weight of it.

For this the Socinians object to us at every turn, as the unavoidable conſequence of our interpretation of this paſſage of St. John, and of all other texts of ſcripture produced by us to the ſame purpoſe, notwithſtanding that this interpretation hath obtained in the Chriſtian church for ſo many ages. Now whoſoever can believe that the Chriſtian religion hath done the work for which it was principally deſigned ſo ineffectually, muſt have very little reverence for it; nay, it muſt be a marvellous civility in him if he believe it at all. All that can be ſaid in this caſe is, that it pleaſes GOD many times to permit men to hold very inconſiſtent things, and which do in truth, though they themſelves diſcern it not, moſt effectually overthrow one another.

Secondly, another mighty prejudice againſt this interpretation is this, that according to this rate of liberty in interpreting ſcripture, it will ſignify very little or nothing, when any perſon or party is concerned to oppoſe any doctrine contained in it; and the plaineſt texts for any article of faith, how fundamental and neceſſary ſoever, may by the ſame arts and ways of interpretation be eluded and rendered

dered utterly ineffectual for the eſtabliſhing of it. For example: if any man had a mind to call in queſtion that article of the creed concerning the creation of the world, why might he not, according to Socinus his way of interpreting St. John, underſtand the firſt chapter of Geneſis concerning the beginning of the moſaical diſpenſation, and interpret the creation of the heaven and the earth to be the inſtitution of the Jewiſh polity and religion, as by the new heavens and the new earth they pretend is to be underſtood the new ſtate of things under the goſpel? And why may not the chaos ſignify that ſtate of darkneſs and ignorance, in which the world was before the giving of the law by Moſes? And ſo on; as a very learned divine * of our own hath ingeniouſly ſhewn more at large. SERM. XLIV.

There is no end of wit and fancy, which can turn any thing any way, and can make whatever they pleaſe to be the meaning of any book, though never ſo contrary to the plain deſign of it, and to that ſenſe which at the firſt hearing and reading of it is obvious to every man of common ſenſe.

And this, in my opinion, Socinus hath done in the caſe now before us, by impoſing a new and odd and violent ſenſe upon this paſſage of St. John, directly contrary to what any man would imagine to be the plain and obvious meaning of it, and contrary likewiſe to the ſenſe of the Chriſtian church in all ages down to his time; who yet had as great or greater advantages of underſtanding St. John aright, and as much integrity as any man can now modeſtly pretend to: and all this only to ſerve and ſupport an

* Dr. Stillingfleet, late biſhop of Worceſter.

SERM. XLIV.

opinion which he had entertained before, and therefore was resolved one way or other to bring the scripture to comply with it: and if he could not have done it, it is greatly to be feared that he would at last have called in question the divine authority of St. John's gospel, rather than have quitted his opinion.

And to speak freely, I must needs say that it seems to me a much fairer way to reject the divine authority of a book, than to use it so disingenuously, and to wrest the plain expressions of it with so much straining and violence from their most natural and obvious sense: for no doctrine whatsoever can have any certain foundation in any book, if this liberty be once admitted, without regard to the plain scope and occasion of it, to play upon the words and phrases with all the arts of criticism, and with all the variety of allegory, which a brisk and lively imagination can devise: which I am so far from admiring in the expounding of the holy scriptures, that I am always jealous of an over-laboured and far-fetched interpretation of any author whatsoever.

I do readily grant, that the Socinian writers have managed the cause of the reformation against the innovations and corruptions of the church of Rome both in doctrine and practice, with great acuteness and advantage in many respects: but I am sorry to have cause to say, that they have likewise put into their hands better and sharper weapons than ever they had before for the weakning and undermining of the authority of the holy scriptures; which Socinus indeed hath in the general strongly asserted, had he

he not by a dangerous liberty of impoſing a foreign and forced ſenſe upon particular texts brought the whole into uncertainty. SERM. XLIV.

Thirdly, which is as conſiderable a prejudice againſt this new interpretation of this paſſage of St. John as either of the former, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that this point, of the exiſtence of the Word before his incarnation, does not rely only upon this ſingle paſſage of St. John, but is likewiſe confirmed by many other texts of the new teſtament conſpiring in the ſame ſenſe, and utterly incapable of the interpretation which Socinus gives of it.

I find he would be glad to have it taken for granted, that this is the only text in the new teſtament to this purpoſe: and therefore he ſays very cunningly, that this doctrine of the exiſtence of the Son of GOD before his incarnation is too great a doctrine to be eſtabliſhed upon one ſingle text. And this is ſomething, if it were true, that there is no other text in the new teſtament that does plainly deliver the ſame ſenſe: and yet this were not ſufficient to bring in queſtion the doctrine delivered in this paſſage of St. John.

That "GOD is a ſpirit," will I hope be acknowledged to be a very weighty and fundamental point of religion; and yet I am very much miſtaken, if there be any more than one text in the whole bible that ſays ſo, and that text is only in St. John's goſpel. I know it may be ſaid, that from the light of natural reaſon it may be ſufficiently proved that GOD is a ſpirit: but ſurely Socinus, of all men, cannot ſay this with a good grace; becauſe he denies that the exiſtence of a GOD can be known by natural

SERM. XLIV.

light without divine revelation: and if it cannot be known by natural light that there is a GOD, much leſs can it be known by natural light what GOD is, whether a ſpirit or a body.

And yet after all it is very far from being true, that there is but one text to this purpoſe; which yet he thought fit to inſinuate, by way of excuſe, for the novelty and boldneſs of his interpretation; of which any one that reads him may ſee that he was ſufficiently conſcious to himſelf, and therefore was ſo wiſe as to endeavour, by this ſly inſinuation, to provide and lay in againſt it. I have likewiſe another reaſon which very much inclines me to believe that Socinus was the firſt author of this interpretation, becauſe it ſeems to me next to impoſſible, that a man, of ſo good an underſtanding as he was, could ever have been ſo fond of ſo ill-favoured a child if it had not been his own. And yet I do not at all wonder that his followers came into it ſo readily, ſince they had him in ſo great a veneration, it being natural to all ſects to admire their maſter; beſides that, I doubt not but they were very glad to have ſo great an authority as they thought him to be, to vouch for an interpretation which was ſo ſeaſonably deviſed for the relief of their cauſe, in ſo much danger to be overthrown by a text that was ſo plain and full againſt them.

And how little ground there is for this inſinuation, that this is the only text in the New Teſtament to this purpoſe, I ſhall now ſhew from a multitude of other texts, to the ſame ſenſe and purpoſe with this paſſage of St. John. And I ſhall rank them under two heads.

Firſt,

SERM. XLIV.

Firſt, Thoſe which expreſly aſſert the Son of GOD to have been, and to have been in heaven with GOD, and partaker with him in his glory, before his incarnation and appearance in the world.

Secondly, Thoſe which affirm that the world and all creatures whatſoever were made by him.

I. Thoſe texts which expreſly aſſert the Son of GOD to have been, and to have been in heaven with GOD, and partaker with him in his glory, before his incarnation and appearance in the world.

" No man hath aſcended into heaven, but he " that came down from heaven, the Son of man " who is in heaven :" where the Son is ſaid to have " come down from heaven," in reſpect of the union of his divinity with human nature, and his ſpecial reſidence in it here below : and yet he is ſaid ſo to have " come down from heaven" as ſtill " to " be in heaven : he that came down from heaven, " the Son of man who is in heaven," that is, in reſpect of his divinity by which he is every where preſent : " And he that came down from hea- " ven" is here called " the Son of man," by the ſame figure that his blood is elſewhere called " the blood of GOD," the apoſtle aſcribing that to one nature which is proper to the other : this we take to be the moſt natural and eaſy ſenſe of this text, and moſt agreeable to the tenour of the new teſtament. John iii. 13. Acts xx. 28.

Again ; " What and if ye ſhall ſee the Son of " man aſcend up where he was before ?" So that if he really " aſcended up into heaven" after his reſurrection, he was really there before his incarnation. John vi. 62.

SERM. XLIV.

"Before Abraham was," says our blessed SAVIOUR, "I am;" the obvious sense of which words
John viii. 58. is, that he had a real existence before Abraham was actually in being.

John xiii. 3. Again it is said, that "JESUS knowing that the "Father had given all things into his hands, and "that he was come from GOD, and went to GOD, &c."

John xvi. 27, 28. And again; "For the Father himself loveth "you, because ye loved me, and have believed that
Ver. 28. "I came out from GOD. I came forth from the "Father, and am come into the world;" again, "I leave the world, and go to the Father:" This was so very plain, that his disciples, who were slow enough of apprehension in other things, did understand this so well, that upon this declaration of his they were convinced of his omniscience, which is an incommunicable property of the divinity: for so it im-
Ver. 29, 30. mediately follows, "His disciples said unto him, "LORD, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest "no parable: Now are we sure that thou knowest "all things, and needest not that any man should "ask thee: By this we believe that thou camest "forth from GOD." So that either this which I have all along declared must be the meaning of our SAVIOUR's words, or else his disciples were grosly mistaken and did not understand him at all: and if so, then surely our SAVIOUR before he had proceeded any further would have corrected their mistake, and have set them right in this matter: but so far is he from doing that, that he allows them to have
Ver. 31. understood him aright: for thus it follows, "JESUS "answered them, Do ye now believe?" As if he had said, I am glad that you are at last convinced

and

and do believe that "I came from GOD," and muſt "return to him;" and that "I know all things," which none but GOD can do. Is it now poſſible for any man to read this paſſage, and yet not to be convinced that the diſciples underſtood our SAVIOUR to ſpeak literally? But if his meaning was as the Socinians would make us believe, then the diſciples did perfectly miſtake his words; the contrary whereof is, I think, very plain and evident beyond all contradiction. SERM. XLIV.

Again, "And now, O Father, glorify me with "thine own ſelf, with the glory which I had with "thee, before the world was:" this ſurely is not ſpoken of his "being with GOD" after his incarnation, and before his entrance upon his publick miniſtry: they have not, I think, the face to underſtand this expreſſion, "before the world was," of the new creation, but do endeavour to avoid it another way, which I ſhall conſider by and by. John xvii. 5.

And a little after, "I have given them the words "which thou gaveſt me, and they have received "them, and known aſſuredly that I came from "thee, and that thou didſt ſend me." Ver. 8.

Again, "That which was from the beginning, "which we have heard, which we have ſeen with "our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our "hands have handled of the Word of life: for the "life was manifeſted, and we have ſeen it, and "bear witneſs, and ſhew unto you that eternal life," for ſo he calls "the Son of GOD, which was with the "Father, and was manifeſted unto us." 1 John i. 1, 2.

And that he was not only "with GOD" before he aſſumed human nature, but alſo was really GOD,

St.

SERM. XLIV.

Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

St. Paul tells us: "Let this mind be in you, which "was also in CHRIST JESUS, who being in the "form of οὐχ' ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο, did not arrogate to "himself to be equal with GOD," that is, he made no ostentation of his divinity: for this I take to be the true meaning of that phrase, both because it is so used by Plutarch, and because it makes the sense much more easy and current, thus, "who being in "the form of GOD, did not assume an equality with "GOD," that is, he did not appear in the glory of his divinity, which was hid under a veil of human flesh and infirmity; "but he emptied himself, and "took upon him the form of a servant, and was "made in the likeness of men, and being found in "fashion as a man," or in the habit of a man, "he "became obedient to the death, &c." So that if "his being made in the likeness and fashion of a "man" does signify, that he was really man by his incarnation, then surely his "being in the form of GOD" when he took upon him "the fashion and "likeness of man", and "the form of a servant" or slave, must in all reason signify that he was really GOD before he became man: for which reason the same apostle did not doubt to say, that "GOD "was manifested in the flesh."

1 Tim. iii. 16.

And now I hope that I have made it fully appear, that the beginning of St. John's gospel is not the single and only text upon which we ground this great doctrine, as Socinus calls it, and as we really esteem it to be: for you see that I have produced a great many more; to avoid the dint and force whereof the Socinians do chiefly make use of these two answers.

First,

SERM. XLIV.

Firſt, to thoſe texts which ſay "he was in hea-"ven," and "came down from heaven," they give this anſwer; that our SAVIOUR, ſome time before his entrance upon his publick miniſtry, they cannot agree preciſely when, was taken up into heaven, and then and there had the will of GOD revealed to him, and was ſent down from heaven again to make it known to the world.

This is ſo very arbitrary and precarious a ſuppoſition, that I muſt confeſs myſelf not a little out of countenance for them, that men of ſo much wit and reaſon ſhould ever be put to ſo ſorry and pitiful a ſhift. For can any man imagine, that in ſo exact a hiſtory of our SAVIOUR's life, written by ſeveral perſons, the relation of ſo important a matter as this, and of the circumſtances of it, ſhould be wholly omitted? That we ſhould have a particular account of his being carried into Egypt in his infancy, and of the time when he was brought back from thence: of his diſputing in the temple with the jewiſh doctors, and putting them to ſilence when he was but twelve years of age: a punctual relation of his being baptized by John; and how after that "he was "led by the ſpirit into the wilderneſs to be tempted "of the devil, and was carried by that evil ſpirit from one place to another: but not one word of his being taken up by GOD into heaven, and of his coming down again from thence; not the leaſt intimation given either of the time or any other circumſtance of ſo memorable a thing, upon which, according to the Socinians, the authority of his miſſion, and the divinity of his doctrine did ſo much depend: when ſo many things of ſo much leſs mo-

SERM. XLIV.

ment are so minutely and exactly reported, what can be the reason of this deep silence in all the evangelists concerning this matter? But above all, it is to be wondered that St. John, who wrote his gospel last, and, as Eusebius tells us, on purpose to supply the omissions of the other evangelists, should give no account of this thing, and yet, as the Socinians suppose, should so often take it for granted, and refer to it; as when it is said that "he came forth from "GOD," and was "sent from GOD," and "came "down" from heaven, besides several other expressions to this purpose.

Who can believe this? And can it then be reasonable to suppose such a thing? and this without any ground from the history of the gospel, only to serve an hypothesis which they had taken up, and which they cannot maintain, unless they may have leave to make a supposition, for which they have nothing in truth to say, but only that it is necessary to defend an opinion, which they are resolved not to part with upon any terms?

This is so inartificial, not to say absurd a way of avoiding a difficulty, to take for granted whatever is necessary to that purpose, that no man of common ingenuity would make use of it: and there is no surer sign that a cause is greatly distressed, than to be driven to such a shift. For do but give a man leave to suppose what he pleases, and he may prove what he will, and avoid any difficulty whatever that can be objected to him.

Besides, that according to this device the Son of GOD did not first come from heaven into the world, as the scripture seems every where to say, but first

was

was in the world, and then went to heaven, and from thence came back into the world again: and he was not "in the beginning with GOD," but was firſt in the world, and afterwards with GOD; whereas St. John ſays, that the "Word was in the beginning," and then "was made fleſh, and dwelt "among us:" but they ſay, that he firſt "was "made fleſh," and then a great while after was "in the beginning with God:" A ſuppoſition which is quite contrary to all the texts which I have mentioned. SERM. XLIV.

Nor do the ſeveral parts of this interpretation of theirs agree very well together. "In the begin-"ning," that is, ſay they, when the goſpel firſt began to be publiſhed, "was the Word;" and then, that is, "in the beginning, he was with GOD," that is, in heaven, to receive from GOD that doctrine which he was to deliver to the world: but if by "the beginning" be meant the firſt publication of the goſpel, he was not then with GOD, but had been with him, and was come back from him before he entred upon his publick miniſtry, which they make to be the meaning of "the beginning:" and "in "the beginning he was GOD," that is, ſay they, not GOD by nature, but by office and divine conſtitution: and yet in this again they fall foul upon themſelves, for they ſay he was not declared to be GOD till after his reſurrection, and his being advanced to the right-hand of GOD: ſo that he was not GOD in their ſenſe of "the beginning," that is, when he entred upon his publick miniſtry, and began to preach the goſpel.

SERM. XLIV.

Secondly, as to ſome other texts which ſpeak of his exiſtence before his incarnation, as that he was "glorified with his Father before the world was;" and "before Abraham was, I am:" theſe they interpret thus, that "he was glorified with his Fa-"ther before the world was," and that he was before "Abraham was," viz. in the divine foreknowledge and decree: but then ſurely they do not conſider that this is nothing but what might have been ſaid of any other man, and even of Abraham himſelf, that "before he was," that is, before he had a real and actual exiſtence, he was in the purpoſe and decree of GOD, that is, before he was, GOD did intend he ſhould be: which is a ſenſe ſo very flat, that I can hardly abſtain from ſaying it is ridiculous. For certainly our SAVIOUR did intend, by ſaying this of himſelf, to give himſelf ſome preference and advantage above Abraham, which this ſenſe and interpretation does not in the leaſt do: becauſe of any other man, as well as of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, it may as truly be ſaid, that he was in the foreknowledge and decree of GOD before Abraham was born.

And I cannot but obſerve further, that our SAVIOUR does not ſay before Abraham was, I was; but "before Abraham was, I AM:" which is the proper name of GOD, whereby is ſignified the eternal duration and permanency of his being: in which ſenſe he is ſaid by the apoſtle to the Hebrews to be "the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever:" and ſo likewiſe he deſcribes himſelf in St. John's viſions, "I am α and ω, the beginning and the end-"ing, ſaith the LORD, which is, and which was, "and which is to come, the Almighty:" and that

Heb. xiii. 8.

Rev. i. 8.

this

this is ſpoken of the Son you may ſee in the ſame chapter, where he ſays of himſelf, " I am the firſt " and the laſt :" and ſo likewiſe he deſcribes himſelf again, " I am α and ω, the beginning and the " end, the firſt and the laſt :" and that we may not doubt who it is that thus deſcribes his own eternity, he continuing ſtill to ſpeak in the ſame perſon, ſays, " I JESUS have ſent mine angel, &c." After this I ſhall only obſerve, that all theſe expreſſions are the common deſcription which the ſcripture gives of the eternity of GOD, whoſe being is commenſurate to all the ſeveral reſpects of " duration, paſt, preſent," and " to come :" beſides, that the attribute of Almighty is alſo a part of this deſcription, which is ſo peculiar a property of GOD, I mean of him who is GOD by nature, that the ſcripture never gives it to any other.

SERM. XLIV.

Ver. 17. Rev. xxii. 13. Ver. 16.

II. I ſhall in the next place produce thoſe texts which do expreſly affirm " that the world and all " creatures whatſoever were made by him :" and this will not only infer his exiſtence before his incarnation, but from all eternity.

And for this, beſides this paſſage of St. John, we have the apoſtle to the Hebrews moſt expreſs, who ſays, that " by him GOD made the worlds :" and St. Paul likewiſe ſays the ſame more fully and particularly, calling JESUS CHRIST, who was the " Son of GOD, the firſt-born of every creature," that is, as I have ſhewn in my former diſcourſe, the " heir" and " lord of the whole creation : for " by him," ſays he, " were all things created that " are in heaven, and that are in earth, viſible and " inviſible ;

Heb. i. 2. Coloſſ. i. 15, 16.

SERM. XLIV.

" invisible; whether they be thrones or dominions, " principalities or powers;" for so he calls the several orders of angels: " all things were created by " him, and for him, and he is before all things:" or, as he is described in St. John's vision, he " is " the beginning of the creation of GOD," that is, the principal and efficient cause of the creation; or else, he was when all things began to be made, and therefore must be before any thing was created, and for that reason could not be a creature himself; and consequently, must of necessity have been from all eternity.

Now these texts must necessarily be understood of the old creation, and of the natural world, and not of the moral world, and the renovation and reformation of the minds and manners of men by the gospel: for that was only the world here below which was reformed by him, and not things in heaven; not the invisible world, not the several orders of " good angels, which kept their first station," and have no need to be reformed and made anew: nor the devil and his evil angels; for though since the preaching of the gospel they have been under greater restraint, and kept more within bounds, yet we have no reason to think that they are at all reformed, but are devils still, and have the same malice and mind to do all the mischief to mankind that GOD will suffer them to do.

So that these texts seem, at first view, to be very plain and pressing of themselves, but they appear to be much more convincing, when we consider the groundless interpretations whereby they endeavour to evade the dint and force of them. For can any

man that ſeriouſly attends to the perpetual ſtile and phraſe of the new teſtament, and to the plain ſcope and drift of the apoſtle's reaſoning in theſe texts, be induced to believe that when St. Paul tells us, that "all things were created by him, that are in "heaven and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible; "whether they be thrones, or dominions, or prin- "cipalities, or powers:" I ſay, can any man of good ſenſe perſuade himſelf, that by all this the apoſtle means no more than the moral renovation of the world here below, and the reformation of mankind by JESUS CHRIST, and his goſpel which was preached unto them? SERM. XLIV.

But there is yet one text more to this purpoſe, which I have reſerved to the laſt place; becauſe I find Schlictingius and Crellius, in their joint comment upon it, to be put to their laſt ſhifts to avoid the force of it. It is in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, at the beginning of it; where the apoſtle thus deſcribes the Son of GOD; "GOD," ſays he, "hath Heb. i. 2. "in theſe laſt days ſpoken to us by his Son, whom "he hath conſtituted heir of all things,, by whom "alſo he made the worlds:" from whence he argues the excellency of the goſpel above the law: for the law was given by angels, but the goſpel by the Son of GOD; whoſe preheminence above the angels he ſhews at large in the two firſt chapters of this epiſtle.

And to this end he proves the two parts of the deſcription which had been given of him, namely, that GOD had "conſtituted him heir of all things," Ver. 2. and that "by him he made the worlds."

Firſt,

SERM. XLIV.

First, That God had "constituted him heir of "all things," which is no where said of the angels: but of him it is said that he was "made so much "better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance "obtained a more excellent name than they." The angels are only called God's ministers, for which the apostle cites the words of the psalmist; but to Christ he gives the title of "his Son," and "his "first begotten," by virtue whereof he is "heir "of all things: for to which of the angels said he "at any time, thou art my son, this day have I "begotten thee?" And this I will agree with them to be spoken of Christ, with respect to his resurrection, by which, as St. Paul tells us, he was "powerfully declared to be the Son of God." This is the first prerogative of Christ above the angels: but there is a far greater yet behind; for he proves,

Ver. 7. Pf. civ. 4. Ver. 6. Rom. i. 4.

Secondly, That he had not only the title of God given him; but that he was "truly and really "God," because "he made the world." That the title of God was given him, he proves by a citation out of the psalmist, "but unto the Son he saith, "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, &c." And that he was truly and really God, because "he "made the world," he proves by a citation out of another psalm, where it is said of him, "Thou, "Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundati-"ons of the earth, and the heavens are the works "of thy hands: they shall perish, &c."

Heb. i. 8. Pf. xlv. 6, 7. Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.

Let us now see how Schlictingius and Crellius interpret this text cited out of the Psalmist by the apostle,

apostle as spoken of CHRIST. They say, * that the author of this epistle could not have referred to CHRIST the former words of this citation, which speak of the creation of heaven and earth, unless he had taken it for granted that CHRIST is the most high GOD; especially if they be understood, as they must necessarily be by those who take this for granted, to be spoken in the first place and directly to, or concerning CHRIST. For since all the words of the psalm are manifestly spoken of the most high GOD, but that CHRIST is that GOD is not signified, no not so much as by one word in that psalm, it is necessary that if you will have these words to be directed to CHRIST, you must take it for granted that CHRIST is that most high GOD of whom the psalmist there speaks.

Now we will join issue with these interpreters upon this concession, viz. that the author of this epistle could not have referred these words, which speak of the creation of heaven and earth, to CHRIST, without taking it for granted that CHRIST is truly that GOD who made the world. And if the author of this epistle does affirm these words of the psalmist to be spoken of CHRIST, then they must acknowledge CHRIST to be the true GOD who made

* Ne referre quidem hæc priora verba, de cœli terræque creatione loquentia, ad Christum potuisset autor, nisi pro concesso sumsisset Christum esse summum illum Deum, cœli & terræ creatorem; præsertim si ea, ut necesse foret, primò & directè ad Christum dicta esse censeas. Nam cum omnia psalmi verba manifestè de Deo loquuntur, Christum autem Deum illum esse ne unico quidem verbo in toto hoc psalmo indicetur; necesse est ut si verba illa ad Christum directa esse velis, pro concesso sumas, Christum esse Deum illum summum de quo in psalmo sermo est.

SERM. XLIV.

heaven and earth: but the author of this epiſtle does as evidently affirm theſe words to be ſpoken to or of CHRIST, as he does the words of any other text cited in this chapter: and for this I appeal to the common ſenſe of every man that reads them.

Theſe interpreters indeed are contented that the latter part of this citation ſhould be ſpoken of CHRIST, but not the former: but why not the former as well as the latter? when they have ſo expreſly told us that all the words of this pſalm are manifeſtly ſpoken of GOD. What is the myſtery of this? Could they not as eaſily have interpreted the former part which ſpeaks of the creation of heaven and earth, concerning the moral world, and the new creation or reformation of mankind by JESUS CHRIST and his goſpel, as well as ſo many other plain texts to the ſame purpoſe? No doubt they could as well have done it, and have ſet as good a face upon it when they had done it. But why then did they not do it? It was for a reaſon which they had no mind to tell, but yet it is not hard to be gueſſed at, namely, that if they had admitted the former words to have been ſpoken of CHRIST, they knew not what to do with the latter part of this citation, "They ſhall periſh, but thou remaineſt; "they ſhall wax old as a garment, and as a veſture "ſhalt thou fold them up, and they ſhall be "changed." What ſhall periſh, and wax old, and be changed? Why, the earth and the heavens which the Son had made, that is, the moral world, the reformation of mankind, and the new creation of things by the goſpel. All theſe muſt have undergone the ſame fate with the natural world,

Ver. 11, 12.

world, and muſt not only have been defaced, but utterly deſtroyed and brought to nothing. This they would not ſay, but they did ſee it, though they would not ſeem to ſee it: and we may plainly ſee by this, that they can interpret a text right when neceſſity forceth them to it, and they cannot without great inconvenience to their cauſe avoid it: but when men have once reſolved to hold faſt an opinion they have taken up, it then becomes not only convenient but neceſſary to underſtand nothing that makes againſt it: and this is truly the preſent caſe: but in the mean time where is ingenuity and love of truth?

And thus I have, with all the clearneſs and brevity I could, ſearched to the very foundations of this new interpretation of this paſſage of the evangeliſt, upon which the divinity of the Son of GOD is ſo firmly eſtabliſhed; and likewiſe of the groſs miſinterpretations of ſeveral other texts to the ſame purpoſe in this evangeliſt, and in other books of the new teſtament: all which interpretations I have endeavoured to ſhew to be not only contrary to the ſenſe of all antiquity, of which as Socinus had but little knowledge, ſo he ſeems to have made but little account; but to be alſo evidently contrary to the perpetual tenour and ſtile of the holy ſcripture.

Before I go off from this argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing, wherein our adverſaries in this cauſe do perpetually glory, as a mighty advantage which they think they have over us in this point of the divinity of the Son of GOD, and conſequently in that other point of the bleſſed Trinity: namely, that they have reaſon clearly on their ſide

SERM. XLIV.

in this controverſy, and that the difficulties and abſurdities are much greater and plainer on our part than on theirs.

Here they are pleaſed to triumph without modeſty, and without meaſure: and yet notwithſtanding this, I am not afraid here likewiſe to join iſſue with them, and am contented to have this matter brought to a fair trial at the bar of reaſon, as well as of ſcripture, expounded by the general tradition of the Chriſtian church: I ſay by general tradition, which next to ſcripture is the beſt and ſureſt confirmation of this great point now in queſtion between us, and that which gives us the greateſt and trueſt light for the right underſtanding of the true ſenſe and meaning of ſcripture not only in this, but in moſt other important doctrines of the Chriſtian religion.

I am not without ſome good hopes, I will not ſay confidence, for I never thought that to be ſo great an advantage to any cauſe as ſome men would be glad to make others believe it is, hoping to help and ſupport a weak argument by a ſtrong and mighty confidence: but ſurely modeſty never hurt any cauſe, and the confidence of man ſeems to me to be much like the wrath of man, which St. James tells us, "worketh not the righteouſneſs of GOD;" that is, it never does any good, it never ſerves any wiſe and real purpoſe of religion.

Chap. i. ver. 20.

I ſay, I am not without ſome good hopes, that I have in the foregoing diſcourſes clearly ſhewn, that the tenour of ſcripture and general tradition are on our ſide in this argument, and therefore I ſhall not need to give myſelf the trouble to examine this matter over again. Now

SERM. XLIV.

Now as to the point of reaſon, the great difficulty and abſurdity, which they object to our doctrine concerning this myſtery, amounts to thus much, that it is not only above reaſon, but plainly contrary to it.

As to its being above reaſon, which they are loth to admit any thing to be; this I think will bear no great diſpute: becauſe if they would be pleaſed to ſpeak out, they can mean no more by this, but that our reaſon is not able fully to comprehend it: but what then? Are there no myſteries in religion? That I am ſure they will not ſay, becauſe GOD, whoſe infinite nature and perfections are the very foundation of religion, is certainly the greateſt myſtery of all other, and the moſt incomprehenſible: but we muſt not, nay they will not for this reaſon deny, that there is ſuch a being as GOD. And therefore if there be myſteries in religion, it is no reaſonable objection againſt them that we cannot fully comprehend them: becauſe all myſteries in what kind ſoever, whether in religion or in nature, ſo long, and ſo far as they are myſteries, are for that very reaſon incomprehenſible.

But they urge the matter much farther, that this particular myſtery now under debate is plainly contrary to reaſon: and if they can make this good, I will confeſs that they have gained a great point upon us. But then they are to be put in mind, that to make this good againſt us, they muſt clearly ſhew ſome plain contradiction in this doctrine, which I could never yet ſee done by any. Great difficulty I acknowledge there is in the explication of it, in which the farther we go, beyond what GOD has thought fit to reveal to us in ſcripture concerning it, the more we are entangled; and that which men are

pleaſed

SERM. XLIV.

pleaſed to call an explaining of it, does, in my apprehenſion, often make it more obſcure, that is, leſs plain than it was before ; which does not ſo very well agree with a pretence of explication.

Here then I fix my foot: that there are three differences in the deity, which the ſcripture ſpeaks of by the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, and every where ſpeaks of them as we uſe to do of three diſtinct perſons : and therefore I ſee no reaſon why in this argument we ſhould nicely abſtain from uſing the word perſon ; though I remember that St. Jerom does ſomewhere deſire to be excuſed from it.

Now concerning theſe three, I might in the firſt place urge that plain and expreſs text, " there are " three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the " Word, and the Holy Ghoſt ; and theſe three are " one :" but upon this I will not now inſiſt, becauſe it is pretended that in ſome copies of greateſt antiquity this verſe is omitted ; the contrary whereof is I think capable of being made out very clearly: but this matter would be too long to be debated at preſent.

1 John v. 7.

However that be, thus much is certain and cannot be denied, that our SAVIOUR commanded his apoſtles to " baptize all nations in the name of the " Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt :" and that the apoſtles in their epiſtles do in their moſt uſual form of benediction join theſe three together : and it is yet farther certain, that not only the name and title of GOD, but the moſt incommunicable properties and perfections of the deity, are in ſcripture frequently aſcribed to the Son and the Holy Ghoſt ; one property only excepted, which is peculiar to the Father,

Father, as he is the principle and fountain of the deity, that he is of himſelf and of no other; which is not, nor can be ſaid of the Son and Holy Ghoſt.

Now let any man ſhew any plain and downright contradiction in all this; or any other difficulty beſides this, that the particular manner of the exiſtence of theſe three differences or perſons in the divine nature, expreſs'd in ſcripture by the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, is incomprehenſible by our finite underſtandings, and inexplicable by us: in which I do not ſee what abſurdity there is, ſince our adverſaries cannot deny that many things certainly are, the particular manner of whoſe exiſtence we can neither comprehend, nor explain.

Let us now ſee, whether the opinion of our adverſaries hath not greater difficulties in it, and more palpable abſurdities following from it. They ſay, that the Son of GOD is a mere creature; not GOD by nature, and yet truly and really GOD by office and by divine appointment and conſtitution; to whom the very ſame honour and worſhip is to be given which we give to him who is GOD by nature.

And can they diſcern no difficulty, no abſurdity in this? What? no abſurdity in bringing idolatry by a back-door into the Chriſtian religion, one main deſign whereof was to baniſh idolatry out of the world? And will they in good earneſt conteſt this matter with us, that the giving divine worſhip to a mere creature is not idolatry? And can they vindicate themſelves in this point any other way, than what will in a great meaſure acquit both the pagans and the papiſts from the charge of idolatry?

SERM. XLIV.

What? no absurdity in a god as it were but of yesterday; in a creature god, in a god merely by positive institution; and this in opposition to a plain moral precept of eternal obligation, and to the fixed and immutable nature and reason of things?

So that to avoid the shadow and appearance of a plurality of deities they run really into it, and for any thing I can see into downright idolatry, by "worshipping a creature besides the Creator, who "is blessed for ever." They can by no means allow two gods by nature; no more can we: but they can willingly admit of two gods; the one by nature, and the other by office, to whom they are content to pay the same honour which is due to him who is GOD by nature. Provided CHRIST will be contented to be but a creature, they will deal more liberally with him in another way than in reason is fit.

Rom. i. 25.

And do they see no absurdity in all this? Nothing that is contrary to reason and good sense? Nothing that feels like inconsistency and contradiction? Do they consider how often GOD hath declared that "he "will not give his glory to another?" And that the apostle describes idolatry to be, the giving service, or worship, to things "which by nature are no gods?"

Gal. iv. 8.

Surely, if reason guided by divine revelation were to chuse a god, it would make choice of one who is declared in scripture to be "the only begotten of "the Father, the first and the last, the beginning "and the end, the same yesterday, to day, and for "ever:" much rather than a mere creature, who did not begin to be till about seventeen hundred years ago.

I only

I only propoſe theſe things, without any artificial aggravation, to their moſt ſerious and impartial conſideration; after which I cannot think that theſe great maſters of reaſon can think it ſo eaſy a matter to extricate themſelves out of theſe difficulties. The "GOD of truth" lead us into all truth, and enlighten the minds of thoſe who are in error, and give them "repentance to the acknowledgment of the "truth:" for his ſake who is "the way, the truth, "and the life." SERM. XLIV.

And thus much may ſuffice to have ſaid upon this argument, which I am ſenſible is mere controverſy: a thing which I ſeldom meddle with, and do not delight to dwell upon. But my text, which is ſo very proper for this ſeaſon, hath almoſt neceſſarily engaged me in it: beſides, that I think it a point of that concernment, that all Chriſtians ought to be well inſtructed in it. And I have choſen rather once for all to handle it fully, and to go to the bottom of it, than in every ſermon to be flirting at it, without ſaying any thing to the purpoſe againſt it: a way which in my opinion is neither proper to eſtabliſh men in the truth, nor to convince them of their error.

I ſhall only at preſent make this ſhort reflection upon the whole: that we ought to treat the holy ſcriptures as the oracles of GOD, with all reverence and ſubmiſſion of mind to the doctrine therein revealed: and to interpret them with that candor and ſimplicity which is due to the ſincere declarations of GOD intended for the inſtruction, and not for the deception and deluſion of men: I ſay, we ſhould treat them as the oracles of GOD, and

SERM. XLIV.

not like the doubtful oracles of the heathen deities, that is, in truth of the devil; which were contrived and calculated on purpose to deceive, containing and for the most part intending a sense directly contrary to the appearing and most obvious meaning of the words: for the devil was the first author of equivocation; though the Jesuits have since made it a lawful way of lying, which their father, of whom they learned it, had not credit and authority enough to do.

And it deserves likewise to be very well considered by us, that nothing hath given a greater force to the exceptions of the church of Rome against the holy scriptures being a sufficient and certain rule of faith, than the uncertainty into which they have brought the plainest texts imaginable for the establishing of doctrines of greatest moment in the Christian religion, by their remote and wrested interpretation of them: which way of dealing with them seems to be really more contumelious to those holy oracles, than the downright rejecting of their authority: because this is a fair and open way of attacking them, whereas the other is an insidious and therefore more dangerous way of undermining them.

But as for us, who do in good earnest believe the divine authority of the holy scriptures, let us take all our doctrines and opinions from those clear fountains of truth, not disturbed and darkned by searching anxiously into all the possible senses that the several words and expressions of scripture can bear, and by forcing that sense upon them which is most remote and unnatural, and in the mean time wilfully overlooking and passing by that sense which is most

obvious

obvious and eaſy to the common apprehenſion of any unbiaſſed and impartial reader. This is to uſe the holy ſcriptures as the church of Rome hath done many holy and good men, whom they are pleaſed to brand with the odious name of hereticks, to torture them till they ſpeak the mind of their tormentors, though never ſo contrary to their own.

I will now conclude this whole diſcourſe with a ſaying which I heard from a great and judicious man, *Non amo nimis argutam theologiam*, "I love "no doctrines in divinity, which ſtand ſo very "much upon quirk and ſubtilty." And I cannot upon this occaſion forbear to ſay, that thoſe doctrines of religion and thoſe interpretations of ſcripture have ever been to me the moſt ſuſpected, which need abundance of wit and a great many criticiſms to make them out: and conſidering the wiſdom and goodneſs of Almighty GOD, I cannot poſſibly believe but that all things neceſſary to be believed and practiſed by Chriſtians, in order to their eternal ſalvation, are plainly contained in the holy ſcriptures: GOD ſurely hath not dealt ſo hardly with mankind, as to make any thing neceſſary to be believed or practiſed by us, which he hath not made ſufficiently plain to the capacity of the unlearned as well as of the learned. GOD forbid that it ſhould be impoſſible for any man to be ſaved and to get to heaven without a great deal of learning to direct and carry him thither, when the far greateſt part of mankind have no learning at all. It was well ſaid by Eraſmus, "That it was never well with the Chriſtian world "ſince it began to be a matter of ſo much ſubtilty "and wit for a man to be a true Chriſtian."

SERMON XLV.

Concerning the Incarnation of CHRIST.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 21, 1680.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made flesh.

SERM. XLV.

THE last year about this time, and upon the same occasion of the annual commemoration of the incarnation and nativity of our blessed LORD and SAVIOUR, I began to discourse to you upon these words: in which I told you were contained three great points concerning our SAVIOUR, the author and founder of our religion.

First, his incarnation, "the Word was made," or became "flesh."

Secondly, his life and conversation here amongst us; and dwelt among us, ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, "he "pitched his tabernacle among us," he lived here below in this world, and for some time made his residence and abode with us.

Thirdly, that in this state of his humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his divinity: whilst he appeared as a man and lived amongst us, there were great and glorious testimonies given of him that he was the Son of GOD; and that in so peculiar a manner as no creature can be said to be; "and

" we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only be- SERM. XLV.
" gotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

I began with the firſt of theſe, namely, his incarnation, " the Word was made fleſh :" for the full and clear explication of which words I propoſed to conſider theſe two things.

I. The perſon here ſpoken of, and who it is that is here ſaid to be incarnate, " or made fleſh," namely, the Word. And this I have handled at large in my two former diſcourſes upon this text. I ſhall now proceed in the I.

II. Second place to give ſome account of the nature and manner of this incarnation, ſo far as the ſcripture hath thought fit to reveal and declare this myſtery to us. " The Word was made fleſh," that is, he who is perſonally called the Word, and whom the evangeliſt hath ſo fully and clearly deſcribed in the beginning of his goſpel, he " became fleſh," that is, aſſumed our nature and became man ; for ſo the Word fleſh is frequently uſed in ſcripture for man or human nature. II.

So that by the Word's becoming fleſh, that is, man, the evangeliſt did not only intend to expreſs to us that he aſſumed a human body without a ſoul, but that he became a perfect man, conſiſting of ſoul and body united. It is very probable indeed that the evangeliſt did purpoſely chuſe the word fleſh, which ſignifies the frail and mortal part of humanity, to denote to us the great condeſcenſion of the Son of GOD, in aſſuming our nature with all it's infirmities, and becoming ſubject to frailty and mortality for our ſake.

Having

SERM. XLV.

Having thus explained the meaning of this propoſition, the "Word was made fleſh," I ſhall in a further proſecution of this argument take into conſideration theſe three things.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider more diſtinctly what may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be implied in this expreſſion, of the "Word's being made fleſh."

Secondly, I ſhall conſider the objections which are commonly brought againſt this incarnation of the Son of GOD, from the ſeeming impoſſibility or incongruity of the thing.

Thirdly, and becauſe, after all that can be ſaid in anſwer to theſe objections, it may ſtill appear to us very ſtrange that GOD, who could without all this circumſtance and condeſcenſion, even almoſt beneath the majeſty of the great GOD, at leaſt as we are apt to think, have given laws to mankind, and have offered forgiveneſs of ſins and eternal life upon their repentance for ſins paſt, and ſincere though imperfect obedience for the future; I ſay, it may ſeem ſtrange, that notwithſtanding this GOD ſhould yet make choice of this way and method of our ſalvation: I ſhall therefore in the laſt place endeavour to give ſome probable account of this ſtrange and wonderful diſpenſation and ſhew that it was done in great condeſcenſion to the weakneſs and common prejudices of mankind; and that when it is thoroughly conſidered it will appear to be much more for our comfort and advantage than any other way which the wiſdom of this world would have been apt to deviſe and pitch upon. And in all this I ſhall all along take either the plain declarations of ſcripture, or the pregnant intimations of it for my ground and guide.

I. I ſhall

SERM. XLV.

I. I ſhall conſider more diſtinctly what may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be implied in this expreſſion of the "Word's being made fleſh," namely, theſe five things.

Firſt, the truth and reality of the thing: that the Son of GOD did not only appear in the form of human fleſh, but did really aſſume it; "the Word "was made fleſh," as the evangeliſt expreſly declares: for if this had been only a phantaſm and apparition, as ſome hereticks of old did fancy, it would in all probability have been like the appearance of angels mentioned in the old teſtament, ſudden and of ſhort continuance, and would after a little while have vaniſhed and diſappeared. But "he "dwelt among us," and converſed familiarly with us a long time, and for many years together; and the ſcripture uſeth all the expreſſions which are proper to ſignify a real man, and a real human body, and there were all the ſigns and evidences of reality that could be. For the Word is ſaid to be made fleſh, and CHRIST is ſaid to be "of the ſeed of David accord-"ing to the fleſh," and to be "made of a woman;" and all this to ſhew that he was a real man, and had a real and ſubſtantial body: for he was born, and by degrees grew up to be a man, and did perform all ſuch actions as are natural and proper to men: he continued a great while in the world, and at laſt ſuffered and died, and was laid in the grave. He did not vaniſh and diſappear like a phantaſm or ſpirit, but he died like other men: and his body was raiſed again out of the grave; and after he was riſen, he converſed forty days upon earth, and permitted his body to be handled, and laſt of all was viſibly taken up into heaven. So

SERM. XLV.

So that either we must grant him to have had a real body, or we have cause to doubt whether all mankind be not mere phantasms and apparitions. For greater evidence no man can give that he is really clothed with and carries about him a true and substantial body, than the Son of GOD did in the days of his flesh. It is to me very wonderful upon what ground, or indeed to what end, the hereticks of old, Marcion and others, did deny the reality of CHRIST's flesh. Surely they had a great mind to be hereticks, who took up so senseless an opinion for no reason, and to no purpose.

Secondly, another thing implied in the "Word's "being made flesh," is, that this was done peculiarly for the benefit and advantage of men. "The "Word was made flesh," that is, became man; for so I have shewn the word flesh to be often used in scripture. And this the author of the epistle to the Hebrews takes very special notice of, as a great grace and favour of GOD to mankind, that his Son appeared in our nature, and consequently for our salvation; as it is said in the Nicene creed, "who for "us men and for our salvation came down from "heaven, and was incarnate," &c. "For verily," says the apostle, "he took not on him the nature "of angels, but of the seed of Abraham," οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται, "he did not assume the "angelical nature," so our translators understood the phrase; but the word also signifies to take hold of a thing which is falling, as well as to assume or take on him. He did not take hold of the angels when they were falling, but suffered them to lapse irrecoverably into misery and ruin: but he took hold

Heb. ii. 16.

of

of human nature when it was falling, and particularly of the ſeed of Abraham, and by the ſeed of Abraham, that is, by "himſelf, in whom all the "nations of the earth were bleſſed," he brought ſalvation firſt to the Jews, and then to the reſt of mankind. The apoſtle chuſes to derive this bleſſing from Abraham, that ſo he might bring it nearer to the Jews to whom he wrote this epiſtle, and might thereby more effectually recommend the goſpel to them, and the glad tidings of that great ſalvation, in which they had ſo peculiar an intereſt. SERM. XLV.

And it is ſome confirmation of the interpretation I have given of that expreſſion, "he took not on "him," &c. That the evangeliſt uſes the very ſame word for taking hold of one that was ready to ſink: for ſo it is ſaid of St. Peter when he was ready to ſink, that "CHRIST put forth his hand ἠγ ἐπι- Matt. xiv. "λάβετο, and caught hold of him," and ſaved him 31. from drowning: and thus the Son of GOD caught hold of mankind, which was ready to ſink into eternal perdition: he laid hold of our nature, or as it is expreſſed in the ſame chapter, "he took part "of fleſh and blood," that in our nature he might be capable of effecting our redemption and deliverance.

But it is no where ſaid in ſcripture, not the leaſt intimation given there, that the Son of GOD ever ſhewed ſuch grace and favour to the angels: but "the Word became fleſh," that is, became man: he did not aſſume the angelical nature, but was contented to be clothed with the rags of humanity, and to be made in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh, that is, of ſinful man.

SERM. XLV.

Thirdly, this expreſſion of "the Word's being "made fleſh," may farther imply his aſſuming the infirmities, and ſubmitting to the miſeries of human nature. This I collect from the word fleſh, by which the ſcripture often uſes to expreſs our frail and mortal nature. The Son of GOD did not only condeſcend to be made man, but alſo to become mortal and miſerable for our ſakes: he ſubmitted to all thoſe things which are accounted moſt grievous and calamitous to human nature: to hunger and want, to ſhame and contempt, to bitter pains and agonies, and to a moſt cruel and diſgraceful death: ſo that in this ſenſe alſo he became fleſh, not only by being clothed with human nature, but by becoming liable to all the frailties and ſufferings of it; of which he had a greater ſhare than any of the ſons of men ever had: for never was ſorrow like to his ſorrow, nor ſufferings like to his ſufferings, the weight and bitterneſs whereof was ſuch as to wring from him, the meekeſt and moſt patient endurer of ſufferings that ever was, that doleful complaint, "My GOD, my GOD, why haſt thou for-"ſaken me?"

Fourthly, in this expreſſion, "the Word is made "fleſh," is likewiſe implied the union of the divinity with human nature in one perſon. And this the text expreſſeth in ſuch words as ſeem to ſignify a moſt perfect, and intimate, and vital union of the divine and human natures of CHRIST in one perſon: "the Word was made," or became, "fleſh:" which what elſe can it ſignify but one of theſe two Things? Either that the eternal word and only begotten Son of GOD was changed into a man, which

is

SERM. XLV.

is not only impoſſible to be, but impious to imagine: or elſe, that the Son of GOD did aſſume our nature, and became man, by his divinity being united to human nature as the ſoul is vitally united to the body; without either being changed into it, or confounded with it, or ſwallowed up by it, as the Eutychian hereticks fancied the human nature of CHRIST to be ſwallowed up of his divinity: which had it been ſo, St. John had expreſſed himſelf very untowardly when he ſays, "the Word became "fleſh;" for it had been quite contrary, and fleſh had become the Word, being changed into it, and ſwallowed up by it, and loſt in it.

The only thing then that we can reaſonably imagine to be the meaning of this expreſſion is this, that the Son of GOD aſſumed our nature, and united himſelf with it, as our ſouls are united with our bodies: and as the ſoul and body united make one perſon, and yet retain their diſtinct natures and properties; ſo may we conceive the divine and human natures in CHRIST to be united into one perſon: and this without any change or confuſion of the two natures.

I ſay, the divinity united itſelf with human nature: for though fleſh be only mentioned in the text, yet he did not only aſſume a human body, which was the hereſy of Apollinaris and his followers, upon a miſtake of this and ſome other texts of ſcripture: but he aſſumed the whole human nature, that is, a human ſoul united to a real and natural body: for ſo I have ſhewn the word fleſh to be frequently uſed in ſcripture, not only for the body but for the whole man, by an uſual figure of ſpeech: as

on the other hand, ſoul is frequently uſed for the whole man or perſon: ſo many ſouls are ſaid to have gone down with Jacob into Egypt, that is, ſo many perſons.

But this I need not inſiſt longer upon, our SAVIOUR being ſo frequently in ſcripture, and ſo expreſly ſaid to be a man; which could with no propriety of ſpeech have been ſaid, had he only aſſumed a human body: nor could he have been ſaid to have been "made "in all things like unto us, ſin only excepted," had he only had a human body but not a ſoul? For then the meaning muſt have been, that he had been "made in all things like unto us," that is, like to a man, that only excepted which chiefly makes the man, that is, the ſoul: and the addition of thoſe words, "ſin only excepted," had been no leſs ſtrange; becauſe a human body, without a ſoul, is neither capable of being ſaid to have ſin, or to be without it.

And this may ſuffice to have been ſpoken in general, concerning that great myſtery of the hypoſtatical, as they that love hard words love to call it, or perſonal union of the divine and human natures in the perſon of our bleſſed SAVIOUR: in the more particular explication whereof, it is not ſafe for our ſhallow underſtandings to wade farther than the ſcripture goes before us, for fear we go out of our depth and loſe ourſelves in the profound inquiry into the deep things of GOD, which he has not thought fit in this preſent ſtate of darkneſs and imperfection, to reveal more plainly and fully to us. It ought to be thought ſufficient, that the ſcripture ſpeaking of the ſame perſon, JESUS CHRIST our bleſſed SAVIOUR,

SERM. XLV.

OUR, doth frequently and expreſly call him both GOD and man: which how it can be ſo eaſily conceived upon any other ſuppoſition, than that of the union of the divine and human natures in one perſon, I muſt confeſs that I am not able to comprehend.

Fifthly and laſtly, all this which I have ſhewn to be implied in this propoſition, "the Word was "made fleſh," does ſignify to us the wonderful and amazing condeſcenſion and love of GOD to mankind in ſending his Son into the world, and ſubmitting him to this way and method for our ſalvation and recovery. "The Word was made fleſh:" what a ſtep is here made in order to the reconciling of men to GOD? From heaven to earth; from the top of glory and majeſty to the loweſt gulf of meanneſs and miſery: the evangeliſt ſeems here to uſe the word fleſh, which ſignifies the meaneſt and vileſt part of humanity, to expreſs to us how low the Son of GOD was contented to ſtoop for the redemption of man. "The Word was made fleſh:" two terms, at the greateſt diſtance from one another, are here brought together: the Son of GOD is here expreſſed to us by one of his higheſt and moſt glorious titles, the Word, which imports both power and wiſdom; "CHRIST the power of GOD, and "the wiſdom of GOD," as the apoſtle calls him: and human nature is here deſcribed by it's vileſt part, fleſh; which imports frailty and infirmity: "the Word became fleſh," that is, ſubmitted to that from which it was at the greateſt diſtance: "He" who was the "power of GOD, and the "wiſdom of GOD," ſubmitted not only to be called,

1 Cor. i. 24.

S. R. M. XLV.

ed, but really to become a frail and miſerable man; not only to aſſume our nature, but to put on all the infirmities, and which is the greateſt of all, the mortality of it.

And this is the great myſtery of godlineſs, that is, of the Chriſtian religion, that GOD ſhould be "manifeſted in the fleſh, and become man," with a moſt gracious and merciful deſign to bring man back again to GOD: that he ſhould become a miſerable, and a mortal man to ſave us from eternal death, and to make us partakers of everlaſting life: that the Son of GOD ſhould condeſcend to inhabit our vile nature, to wear rags and to become a beggar for our ſakes; and all this, not only to repair thoſe diſmal ruins which ſin had made in it, and to reſtore us to our former eſtate; but to better and advance our condition, and by degrees to bring us to a ſtate of much greater perfection and happineſs than that from which we fell.

And that he ſhould become man on purpoſe that he might dwell among us, and converſe with us, and thoroughly inſtruct us in our duty, and ſhew us the way to eternal life by his heavenly doctrine, and as it were take us by the hand, and lead us in that way by the perfect and familiar example of a moſt blameleſs and holy life; ſhewing us how GOD himſelf thought fit to live in this world, when he was pleaſed to become man.

That by converſing with us in the likeneſs and nature of man, he might become a human, and in ſome ſort an equal and familiar, an imitable and encouraging example of innocency and goodneſs, of meekneſs and humility, of patience and ſubmiſſion

to

to the will of GOD under the ſoreſt afflictions and ſufferings, and in a word, a moſt perfect pattern of a divine and heavenly converſation upon earth. SERM. XLV.

And that by this means we might, for our greater encouragement in holineſs and virtue, ſee all that which the law of GOD requires of us exemplified in our nature, and really performed and practiſed by a man like our ſelves.

And that likewiſe in our nature he might conquer and triumph over the two great enemies of our ſalvation, the world and the devil: and by firſt ſuffering death, and then overcoming it, and by reſcuing our nature from the power of it by his reſurrection from the dead, he might deliver us from the fear of death, and give us the glorious hopes of a bleſſed immortality: for by aſſuming our frail and mortal nature he became capable of ſuffering and of ſhedding his precious blood for us, and by that means of purchaſing "forgiveneſs of ſins" and "eternal re-"demption for us."

And farther yet, that by being ſubject to the miſeries and infirmities of humanity, he might from his own experience, the ſureſt and moſt ſenſible ſort of knowledge and inſtruction, learn to have a more compaſſionate ſenſe of our infirmities, and be more apt to commiſerate us in all our ſufferings and temptations, and more ready to ſuccour us labouring under them.

And finally, that as a reward of his obedience and ſufferings in our nature, he might in the ſame nature be "exalted to the right-hand of the majeſty "on high," there to continue "for ever to make "interceſſion for us".

SERM. XLV.

II. I shall in the next place consider the objections against the incarnation of the Son of GOD, from the supposed impossibility and incongruity of the thing. I shall mention three, and endeavour in as few words as I can to give a clear and satisfactory answer to them.

First, it is objected, that the incarnation of the Son of GOD, as I have explained it, necessarily supposing an union of the divinity with human nature is, if not altogether impossible, yet a very unintelligible thing.

Now that there is no impossibility in the thing seems to be very evident from the instance whereby I have endeavoured to illustrate it, of the union between the soul and the body of man, which we must acknowledge to be a thing possible, because we are sure that it is; and yet no man can explain, either to himself or to any one else, the manner how it is, or can be conceived to be; but for all that we are certain, as we can be of any thing, that it is so.

And is it not every whit as possible for GOD, if he so please, to unite himself to human nature, as it is for the soul to be united to the body? And that we are not able to conceive the manner how this is or can be done, ought not in reason to be any prejudice against the truth and certainty of the thing: This indeed may make it seem strange to us, but by no means incredible: because we do most firmly believe a great many things to be, the manner of whose being we do not at all comprehend. And therefore I take it for an undoubted principle which no man can gainsay, that to assure us that a thing really

really is, it is not neceſſary for us to know the manner how it is, or can be: It is ſufficient for us to know, that the thing is not impoſſible; and of that we have the very beſt demonſtration that can be, if we be ſure that it is. SERM. XLV.

Secondly, ſuppoſing this thing to be poſſible, and capable in any meaſure to be underſtood, which yet I have ſhewn not to be neceſſary to our firm belief of it; it is farther objected, that it ſeems to be a thing very incongruous, and much beneath the dignity of the Son of GOD, to be united to human nature, and to ſubmit to ſo near an alliance with that which is ſo very mean and deſpicable: yea to be infinitely more below him, than for the greateſt prince in this world to match with the pooreſt and moſt contemptible beggar.

But herein ſurely we meaſure GOD too much by ourſelves, and becauſe we who are evil have ſeldom ſo much goodneſs as to ſtoop beneath ourſelves for the benefit and good of others, we are apt to think that GOD hath not ſo much goodneſs neither: and becauſe our ill nature, and pride, and folly, as indeed all pride is folly, will not ſuffer us to do it, we preſently conclude that it does not become GOD. But what Pliny ſaid to the emperor Trajan concerning earthly kings and potentates, is much more true of the LORD of glory, the great king of heaven and earth; *Cui nihil ad augendum faſtigium ſupereſt, hoc uno modo creſcere poteſt, ſi ſeipſum ſubmittat, ſecurus magnitudinis ſuæ*, "He that is at the top, and "can riſe no higher, hath yet this one way left to "become greater, by ſtooping beneath himſelf;" which he may very ſafely do, "being ſecure of his

SERM. XLV.

" own greatneſs." The lower any being, be he never ſo high, condeſcends to do good, the glory of his goodneſs ſhines ſo much the brighter. Men are many times too proud and ſtiff to bend, too perverſe and ill-natured to ſtoop beneath their own little greatneſs for the good of others: but GOD, whoſe " ways are not as our ways," and whoſe thoughts are as much above our low and narrow thoughts, " as the heavens are high above the " earth," did not diſdain nor think it below him to become man for the good of mankind; and, as much as the divinity is capable of being ſo, to become miſerable to make us happy. We may be afraid that if we humble our ſelves we ſhall be deſpiſed, that if we ſtoop others will get above us and trample upon us: but GOD, though he condeſcend never ſo low, is ſtill ſecure of his own greatneſs, and that none can take it from him.

So that in truth, and according to right reaſon, it was no real diminution or diſparagement to the Son of GOD to become man for the ſalvation of mankind: but on the contrary, it was a moſt glorious humility, and the greateſt inſtance of the trueſt goodneſs that ever was. And therefore the apoſtle to the Hebrews, when he ſays, that " CHRIST glo- " rified not himſelf to be made an high-prieſt, but" was " appointed of GOD" to this " office, as was " Aaron;" does hereby ſeem to intimate, that it was a glory to the " Son of GOD to be an high-prieſt for " the ſons of men:" for though it was a ſtrange condeſcenſion, yet was it likewiſe a moſt wonderful argument of his goodneſs, which is the higheſt glory of the divine nature.

Heb. v. 5.

In

SERM. XLV.

In ſhort, if GOD for our ſakes did ſubmit himſelf to a condition which we may think did leſs become him, here is great cauſe of thankfulneſs, but none ſurely of cavil and exception: we have infinite reaſon to acknowledge and admire his goodneſs, but none at all to upbraid him with his kindneſs, and to quarrel with him for having deſcended ſo much beneath himſelf to teſtify his love to us, and his tender concernment for our happineſs: beſides, that when we have ſaid all we can about this matter, I hope we will allow GOD himſelf to be the beſt and moſt competent judge what is fit for GOD to do; and that he needs not to take counſel of any of his creatures, what will beſt become him in this or any other caſe: "behold in this thou art not juſt; I "will anſwer thee, that GOD is greater than man: "Why doſt thou diſpute againſt him? For he giveth "not account of any of his matters." Job xxxiii. 12, 13.

Thirdly, if our reaſon could get over this difficulty, and admit that GOD might become man; yet it ſeems very unſuitable to the Son of GOD, and to his great deſign of inſtructing and reforming mankind, to appear in ſo low and ſuffering a condition. This, to the heathen philoſophers, who, as the apoſtle tells us, "by wiſdom knew not GOD," did not only ſeem unreaſonable, but even ridiculous: ſo St. Paul tells us, "we," ſays he, "preach CHRIST "crucified, to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to "the Greeks fooliſhneſs:" to think that ſo poor and mean a man was fit to give laws to mankind, and to awe the minds of men by the authority of his doctrine: that one who was put to death himſelf ſhould be believed by others when he promiſed to 1 Cor. i. 21.

SERM. LXV.

them life and immortality in another world, could not but appear very ſtrange and unreaſonable.

For anſwer to this; beſides other excellent reaſons and ends which the ſcripture expreſly aſſigns of our bleſſed SAVIOUR's humiliation, in his aſſuming our nature with the frailties and miſeries of it: as that he might be a teacher, and an example to us: that by his bitter paſſion he might make expiation for ſin, and ſet us a pattern of the greateſt meekneſs and patience under the greateſt provocations and ſufferings: that having ſuffered ſo grievouſly himſelf, he might know how to commiſerate and pity us in all our temptations and ſufferings: that "by "death he might deſtroy him that had the pow- "er of death, that is, the devil; and might de- "liver thoſe who through fear of death were all "their life-time ſubject to bondage:" I ſay, beſides all this, it was of great uſe that the great teacher and reformer of mankind ſhould live in ſo mean and afflicted a condition, to confront the pride and vanity of the world by this conſideration, that the Son of GOD, and the very beſt man that ever was, was a beggar, and "had not where to lay his head:" and likewiſe to convince men of theſe two great truths, that GOD may grievouſly afflict thoſe whom he dearly loves; and that it is poſſible for men to be innocent and contented in the midſt of poverty, and reproach, and ſufferings.

Had our bleſſed SAVIOUR appeared in the perſon and pomp of a great temporal prince, the influence of his authority and example would probably have made more hypocrites and ſervile converts, but not have perſuaded men one jot more to be inwardly holy

holy and good. The great arguments that muſt do that, muſt not be fetched from the pomp and proſperity of this world, but from the great and eternal recompences of the other. SERM. XLV.

And it is very well worth our obſervation, that nothing puzzled Cæſar Vaninus, who was perhaps the firſt, and the only martyr for atheiſm that ever was; I ſay, nothing puzzled him more, than that he could not from the hiſtory of our SAVIOUR's life and actions, written by the evangeliſts with ſo native a ſimplicity, faſten upon him any probable imputation of a ſecular intereſt and deſign in any thing that he ſaid or did. No doubt but Vaninus, before he made this acknowledgment, had ſearched very narrowly into this matter; and could he have found any colour for ſuch an imputation, he would have thought it ſufficient to have blaſted both him and his religion.

You may be pleaſed to conſider farther, that it was the opinion of the wiſeſt Jews, that the beſt men, the children of GOD who called GOD their father, were many times expoſed to the greateſt ſufferings and reproaches for the trial of their faith, and meekneſs, and patience, as we may ſee at large in the Wiſdom of Solomon, where ſpeaking of the malice and enmity of the wicked to one that was eminently righteous, he brings them in ſaying after this manner, " Let us lie in wait for the righteous, Chap. ii.
" becauſe he is not for our turn; he is clean con- 12, 13,
" trary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our 14, 15, 16,
" offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy 17, 18, 19,
" the tranſgreſſions of our youth: he profeſſeth to 20.
" have the knowledge of GOD, and he calleth him-
" ſelf

SERM. XLV.

" ſelf the child of the LORD: he is grievous unto
" us even to behold; for his life is not like other
" mens, his ways are of another faſhion: we are
" eſteemed of him as counterfeits, he abſtaineth
" from our ways as from filthineſs: he pronounceth
" the end of the juſt to be bleſſed, and maketh his
" boaſt that GOD is his father: let us ſee if his
" words be true, and what ſhall happen in the end
" of him: for if the juſt man be the Son of GOD,
" he will help him, and deliver him from the hands
" of his enemies: let us examine him with deſpite-
" fulneſs and torture, that we may know his meek-
" neſs and prove his patience: let us condemn him
" to a ſhameful death, &c."

This is ſo exact a character of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, both in reſpect of the holineſs and innocency of his life, and of the reproaches and ſufferings which he met with from the wicked and malicious Jews, who perſecuted him all his life, and at laſt conſpired his death, that whoever reads this paſſage, can hardly forbear to think it a prophetical deſcription of the innocency and ſufferings of the bleſſed JESUS: for he certainly in the moſt eminent manner was the Son of GOD, being called by the evangeliſt, " the only begotten of the Father."

Or if this was not a prediction concerning our bleſſed SAVIOUR, yet thus much at leaſt may be concluded from it, that in the judgment of the wiſeſt among the Jews, it was not unworthy of the goodneſs and wiſdom of the divine providence to permit the beſt man to be ſo ill treated by wicked men: and farther, that in their judgment the innocency and virtues of an eminently righteous man are

then ſet off to the beſt advantage, and do ſhine forth with the greateſt luſtre, when he is under the hardeſt circumſtances of ſuffering and perſecution from an evil world.

Add to this likewiſe, that the beſt and wiſeſt of the heathen philoſophers do frequently inculcate ſuch doctrines as theſe: that worldly greatneſs and power are not to be admired, but rather to be deſpiſed by a wiſe man: that men may be very good and dear to the gods, and yet liable to the greateſt miſeries and ſufferings in this world. That whoever ſuffers unjuſtly, and bears it patiently, gives the greateſt teſtimony to goodneſs, and does moſt effectually recommend piety and virtue, as things of greater value than the eaſe and pleaſure of this preſent life: nay farther, that a good man caſt into the hardeſt circumſtances of poverty and miſery, of reproach and ſuffering, is the fitteſt perſon of all other to be the miniſter, and apoſtle and preacher of GOD to mankind; which are the very words of Arian a heathen philoſopher, in his diſcourſes of Epictetus. Now ſurely they who ſay ſuch things, have no reaſon to object to our bleſſed SAVIOUR his low and ſuffering condition, as miſbecoming one that was to be the great teacher and reformer of the world.

And as to that part of the objection, that he who ſo freely promiſed immortality to others could not, or however did not ſave himſelf from death. This vaniſheth into nothing when we conſider, that he reſcued himſelf from the power of the grave: and it is ſo far from being ridiculous to rely upon his promiſe of raiſing us up from the dead, that the objection itſelf is really ſo. For can any thing

be

be more reaſonable, than to rely upon him for our hopes of immortality, who by riſing from the grave himſelf, and by conquering the powers of death and darkneſs, and triumphing openly over them by his viſible aſcenſion into heaven, hath given ſo plain and ſenſible a demonſtration to all mankind that he is able to make good to the uttermoſt all the glorious promiſes which he hath made to us of a bleſſed reſurrection to eternal life and happineſs in another world? To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XLVI.

Concerning the Incarnation of CHRIST.

Preached in the church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 28, 1680.

JOHN i. 14.

The Word was made fleſh.

SERM. XLVI.

THE third and laſt thing which I propoſed upon this argument of the incarnation of the Son of GOD was, to give ſome account of this diſpenſation, and to ſhew that the wiſdom of GOD thought fit thus to order things, in great condeſcenſion to the weakneſs and common prejudices of mankind: and that when all things are duly weighed and

and conſidered, it will appear much more for our comfort and advantage, than any other way which the wiſdom of men would have been moſt apt to deviſe and pitch upon. SERM. XLVI.

And it is the more neceſſary to give ſome account of this matter, becauſe after all that hath hitherto been ſaid in anſwer to the objections againſt it, it may ſtill ſeem very ſtrange to a conſidering man that GOD, who could without all this circumſtance and condeſcenſion, have done the buſineſs for which his Son came into the world and appeared in our nature, that is, could have given the ſame laws to mankind, and have offered to us the forgiveneſs of our ſins and eternal life upon our repentance for ſins paſt, and a ſincere endeavour of obedience for the future: I ſay, that notwithſtanding this, he ſhould yet make choice of this way for the redemption and recovery of faln man, by ſending his Son in our nature to accompliſh this deſign.

And in the handling of this argument I ſhall, as I ſaid before, all along take the expreſs declarations, or at leaſt the pregnant intimations of ſcripture for my ground and guide: it being always ſafeſt to take the reaſons of the divine counſels and actions from GOD himſelf: and in the

Firſt place, I make no manner of doubt to ſay, that it would be a great preſumption and boldneſs in any man to affirm, that the infinite wiſdom of GOD could not have brought about the ſalvation of men by any other way, than by this very way in which he hath done it. For why ſhould we take upon us to ſet limits to infinite wiſdom, and pretend to know the utmoſt extent of it? But ſince GOD

SERM. XLVI.

hath been pleaſed to pitch upon this way rather than any other, this ſurely ought to be reaſon enough to ſatisfy us of the peculiar wiſdom and fitneſs of it, whether the particular reaſons of it appear to us or not.

And yet it cannot be denied to be a very noble argument, and well worthy our conſideration, to enquire into the reaſons of this diſpenſation, and to aſſign them particularly, if we can. For I look upon myſteries and miracles in religion to be much of the ſame nature, and that a great reverence is due to both where they are certain, and neceſſary in the nature and reaſon of the thing: but neither of them are eaſily to be admitted without neceſſity, and very good evidence.

Secondly, I conſider in the next place, that in the ſeveral revelations which God hath made of himſelf to mankind, he hath with great condeſcenſion accommodated himſelf, both as to the manner and degree of them, to the condition and capacity, and other circumſtances of the perſons and people to whom they were made.

Particularly we find, that the diſpenſation of God towards the Jewiſh nation was full of condeſcenſion to the temper, and prejudices, and other circumſtances of that people. For the religion and laws which God gave them were far from being the beſt and moſt perfect in themſelves; in which ſenſe ſome underſtand that paſſage in the prophet Ezekiel, where it is ſaid that God "gave them ſtatutes "which were not good," that is, very imperfect in compariſon of what he could and would have given them, had they been capable of them; and yet

ſuch

ſuch as were very well ſuited and fitted to their preſent capacity and circumſtances. SERM. XLVI.

Thirdly, I obſerve yet farther; that though the Chriſtian religion, as to the main and ſubſtance of it, be a moſt perfect inſtitution, being the law of nature revived and perfected; yet upon a due conſideration of things it cannot be denied, that the manner and circumſtances of this diſpenſation are full of condeſcenſion to the weakneſs of mankind, and very much accommodated to the moſt common and deeply radicated prejudices of men concerning GOD and religion; and peculiarly fitted to remove and root them out of the minds of men, by ſubſtituting ſomething in the place of them, of as near a compliance with them as was conſiſtent with the honour of Almighty GOD, and the great deſign of the Chriſtian religion.

It is not eaſy to give a certain account of the true original of ſome notions and prejudices concerning GOD and religion, which have generally obtained in the world, in that variety of religions, and the different ways of worſhip and ſuperſtition, which have been in ſeveral nations of the earth: but in hiſtory and fact this is certain, that ſome notions, and thoſe very groſs and erroneous, did almoſt univerſally prevail even among thoſe who did extremely differ in the particular forms and modes of their ſuperſtition.

And though ſome of theſe were much more tolerable than others, yet GOD ſeems to have had great conſideration of ſome very weak and groſs apprehenſions of mankind concerning religion. And, as in ſome of the laws given by Moſes, GOD was pleaſed particularly to conſider the hardneſs of the

SERM. XLVI.

hearts of that people; ſo he ſeems likewiſe to have very much ſuited the diſpenſation of the goſpel and the method of our ſalvation, by the incarnation and ſufferings of his Son, to the common prejudices of mankind; eſpecially of the heathen world, whoſe minds were leſs prepared for this diſpenſation than the Jews, if we conſider the light and advantages which the Jewiſh nation had above the Gentile world: that ſo by this means and method he might wean them by degrees from their groſs conceptions of things, and rectify more eaſily their wrong apprehenſions, by gratifying them in ſome meaſure, and in a gracious compliance with our weakneſs, by bending and accommodating the way and method of our ſalvation, to our weak capacity and imperfect conceptions of things.

Fourthly, and that GOD hath done this in the diſpenſation of the goſpel, will I think very plainly appear in the following inſtances; in moſt of which I ſhall be very brief, and only inſiſt ſomewhat more largely upon the laſt of them.

1ſt, The world was much given to admire myſteries in religion. The Jews had theirs; ſeveral of which by GOD's own appointment were reſerved and kept ſecret in a great meaſure from the people; others were added by the ſuperſtition of after ages, and held in equal or rather greater veneration than the former: and the heathen likewiſe had theirs; the devil always affecting to imitate GOD, ſo far as ſerved his wicked and malicious deſign of ſeducing mankind into idolatry and the worſhip of himſelf: and therefore the ſcripture always ſpeaks of the heathen idolatry as the worſhip of devils, and not of GOD:

GOD: ſo that almoſt every nation had their peculiar and celebrated myſteries; moſt of which were either very odd and phantaſtical, or very lewd and impure, or very inhuman and cruel, and every way unworthy of the deity. SERM. XLVI.

But the great myſtery of the Chriſtian religion, the "incarnation of the Son of GOD;" or, as the apoſtle calls it, "GOD manifeſted in the fleſh;" was ſuch a myſtery, as for the greatneſs and wonderfulneſs, for the infinite mercy and condeſcenſion of it, did obſcure and ſwallow up all other myſteries. For which reaſon the apoſtle, in alluſion to the heathen myſteries and in contempt of them, ſpeaking of the great myſtery of the Chriſtian religion ſays, "without controverſy great is the myſtery of "godlineſs, GOD was manifeſted in the fleſh, &c." 1 Tim. iii. 16. Since the world had ſuch an admiration for myſteries, he inſtanceth in that which was a myſtery indeed; a myſtery beyond all diſpute, and beyond all compariſon.

2dly, There was likewiſe a great inclination in mankind to the worſhip of a viſible and ſenſible deity: and this was a main root and ſource of the various idolatries in the heathen world. Now to take men off from this, GOD was pleaſed to appear in our nature; that they who were ſo fond of a viſible deity might have one to whom they might pay divine worſhip without danger of idolatry, and without injury to the divine nature: even a true and natural image of GOD the Father, the fountain of the deity; or, as the apoſtle to the Hebrews deſcribes the Son of GOD, the reſplendency or "bright-"neſs of his Father's glory, and the expreſs" character or "image of his perſon." 3dly,

3dly, Another notion, which had generally obtained among mankind, was concerning the expiation of the ſins of men, and appeaſing the offended deity by ſacrifice, upon which they ſuppoſed the puniſhment due to the ſinner was transfer'd, to exempt him from it: eſpecially by the ſacrifices of men, which had almoſt univerſally prevailed in the Gentile world.

And this notion, of the expiation of ſin by ſacrifices of one kind or other, ſeems to have obtained very early in the world, and among all other ways of divine worſhip to have found the moſt univerſal reception in all times and places. And indeed a great part of the Jewiſh religion and worſhip was a plain condeſcenſion to the general apprehenſions of men concerning this way of appeaſing the deity by ſacrifice: and the greateſt part of the Pagan religion and worſhip was likewiſe founded upon the ſame notion and opinion, which becauſe it was ſo univerſal, ſeems to have had it's original from the firſt parents of mankind; either immediately after the creation, or after the flood; and from thence, I mean as to the ſubſtance of this notion, to have been derived and propagated to all their poſterity.

And with this general notion of mankind, whatever the ground and foundation of it might be, God was pleaſed ſo far to comply as once for all to have a general atonement made for the ſins of all mankind by the ſacrifice of his only Son, whom his wiſe providence did permit by wicked hands to be crucified and ſlain. But I ſhall not at preſent inſiſt any farther upon this; which requires a particular diſcourſe by it ſelf, and may by God's aſſiſtance in due time have it.

4thly,

4thly, Another very common notion and very rife in the heathen world, and a great ſource of their idolatry, was their apotheoſes or canonizing of famous and eminent perſons, who in their life-time had done great things, and ſome way or other been great benefactors to mankind, by advancing them after their death to the dignity of an inferior kind of gods fit to be worſhipped by men here on earth, and to have their prayers and ſupplications addreſſed to them as proper and powerful mediators and interceſſors for them with the ſuperior gods: to theſe they gave the titles of heroes and ſemidei, that is, half-gods; though the notion of a being that is juſt half-infinite ſeems to me very hard to be conceived and defined.

Now to take men off from this kind of idolatry, and to put an end to it, behold one in our "nature "exalted to the right-hand of the majeſty on high," to be worſhipped by men and angels: one that was the truly great benefactor of mankind: one that "was dead, and is alive again, and lives for ever-"more, to make interceſſion for us."

5thly, To give but one inſtance more, which I have already intimated; the world was mightily bent upon addreſſing their requeſts and ſupplications, not to the deity immediately, becauſe their ſuperſtition thought that too great a preſumption, but by ſome mediators between the gods and them, who might with advantage in this humble manner preſent their requeſts ſo as to find acceptance. To this end they made uſe of the dæmons or angels, and of their heroes, or deified men whom I mentioned before, by whom they put up their prayers to the ſupreme

SERM. XLVI.

preme gods, hoping by their interceſſion, and patronage of their cauſe, to obtain a gracious anſwer of them.

In a gracious compliance with this common apprehenſion, and thereby more eaſily and effectually to extirpate this ſort of idolatry, which had been ſo long, and ſo generally practiſed in the world, GOD was pleaſed to conſtitute and appoint one in our nature to be a perpetual advocate and interceſſor in heaven for us, to offer up our prayers to GOD his Father, and to obtain "mercy for us, and grace to "help in time of need."

And for ever to take us off from all other mediators, we are expreſly told in ſcripture, that as there is but one GOD to whom we are to pray, ſo there is

1 Tim. ii. 5. but "one mediator between GOD and men, the "man CHRIST JESUS," by whom we are to offer up our prayers to GOD: and that we need not look out for any other, ſince the apoſtle to the Hebrews

Heb. vii. 25. tells us, that he "is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all "thoſe that come to GOD by him, ſeeing he lives "for ever to make interceſſion for us."

And for this reaſon the church of Rome is altogether inexcuſable in this point, for introducing more mediators and interceſſors, more patrons and advocates in heaven for us: and this not only without any neceſſity, for who can add any virtue and efficacy to the powerful and prevalent interceſſion of the Son of GOD? But likewiſe in direct contradiction to the expreſs conſtitution and appointment of GOD himſelf, who ſays there is "but one me-"diator between GOD and man," and they ſay there ought to be many more, not only the bleſſed virgin,

virgin, but all the saints and angels in heaven. Besides, that by this very thing they revive one notorious piece of the old pagan idolatry, which GOD so plainly designed to extinguish by appointing "one only "mediator between GOD and men." SERM. XLVI.

By this condescension likewise GOD hath given us the comfortable assurance of a most powerful and a perpetual intercessor at "the right hand of GOD" in our behalf. For if we consider CHRIST as man and of the same nature with us, "bone of our bone, "and flesh of our flesh," so very nearly allied and related to us, we may easily believe that he hath a most tender care and concernment for us: that he sincerely wisheth our happiness, and will by all means seek to procure it, if we our selves by our own wilful obstinacy do not hinder it, and resist the kindness and the counsel of GOD against our selves: for if we be resolved to continue impenitent, there is no help for us; we must die in our sins, and salvation it self cannot save us.

But to proceed; it cannot surely but be matter of greatest consolation to us, that "the man CHRIST JESUS" who is now so "highly exalted at the "right-hand of GOD," and who hath "all power "in heaven and earth committed to him," is our patron and advocate in heaven to plead our cause with GOD: since we cannot but think, that he who was pleased to become brother to us all does bear a true affection and good will to us: and that he, who assumed our nature, will heartily espouse our cause, and plead it powerfully for us; and will with all possible advantage recommend our petitions and requests to GOD.

SERM. XLVI.

But then if we consider farther, that he did not only take our nature, but likewise took our infirmities and bore them many years, in which he had long and continual experience of the saddest sufferings to which human nature is subject in this world, and "was tempted in all things like as we are:" this gives us still greater assurance that he who suffered and was tempted himself, cannot but be touched with a lively sense of our infirmities, and must have learned by his own sufferings to compassionate ours, and to be ready to succour us when we are tempted, and to afford us grace and help suitable to all our wants and infirmities: for nothing gives us so just a sense of the sufferings of others, as the remembrance of our own, and the bitter experience of the like sufferings and temptations in our selves.

And this the apostle to the Hebrews doth very particularly insist upon as matter of greatest comfort and encouragement to us, that the Son of GOD did not only assume our nature, but "was made in all things like unto us," and during his abode here upon earth, did suffer and "was tempted like as we are:" for verily, says the apostle, "he took not "on him the nature of angels, but of the seed of "Abraham: wherefore in all things it behoved "him to be made like unto his brethren, that he "might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in "things pertaining to GOD: for in that he himself "suffered being tempted, he is able to succour "them that are tempted."

Heb. ii. 16,17,18.

And again, exhorting the Jews who were newly converted to Christianity to continue stedfast in their profession, notwithstanding all the sufferings to which

upon that account they were expoſed; he comforts them with this conſideration, that we have at the right hand of GOD ſo powerful an advocate and interceſſor for us as the Son of GOD, who is ſenſible of our caſe, having ſuffered the ſame things himſelf, and therefore we cannot doubt of his compaſſion to us, and readineſs to ſupport us in the like ſufferings: ſeeing then, ſays he, "that we have a great "high-prieſt that is paſſed into the heavens, JESUS "the Son of GOD, let us hold faſt our profeſſion: "for we have not an high-prieſt that cannot be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin:" from whence he concludes, that having ſuch an interceſſor we may with great confidence and aſſurance addreſs our ſupplications to GOD for his mercy and help in all our wants and weakneſs, to ſupply the one, and to aſſiſt the other: let us therefore, ſays he, "come boldly to the throne of grace, "that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help "in time of need, χάριν εἰς εὔκαιρον βοήθειαν, grace "for ſeaſonable relief."

SERM. XLVI.

Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.

So that our bleſſed SAVIOUR and redeemer, now that he is advanced to heaven and exalted to the right-hand of GOD, is not unmindful of us in this height of his glory and greatneſs; but with the tendereſt affection and compaſſion to mankind doth ſtill proſecute the deſign of our ſalvation; and in virtue of his meritorious obedience and ſufferings, which he preſents to GOD continually, he offers up our prayers to him, and pleads our cauſe with him, and repreſents to him all our wants and neceſſities, and procures for us a favourable anſwer of our pray-

SERM. XLVI.

ers, and ſupplies of grace and ſtrength proportionable to our temptations and infirmities.

And thus, by virtue of this prevalent interceſſion of his with GOD for us, our ſins are forgiven, and our wants ſupplied, and our requeſts granted, and the gracious aſſiſtance and ſupports of GOD's holy ſpirit are ſeaſonably afforded to us, and we are "kept "by the mighty power of GOD through faith unto "ſalvation:" in a word, all thoſe bleſſings and benefits are procured for us by his interceſſion in heaven, which he purchaſed for us by his blood upon earth.

So that in this method of our ſalvation, beſides many other gracious condeſcenſions which GOD hath made to the weakneſs and prejudices of mankind, our bleſſed SAVIOUR hath perfectly ſupplied the two great wants concerning which mankind was at ſo great a loſs before, namely the want of an effectual expiatory ſacrifice for ſin upon earth, and of a prevalent mediator and interceſſor with GOD in heaven.

And he hath, in great goodneſs and condeſcenſion to our inveterate prejudices concerning theſe things, taken effectual care fully to ſupply both theſe wants; having "appeared in the end of the "world, to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of him-"ſelf;" and in virtue of that ſacrifice appearing now in heaven in the preſence of GOD for us, he is become our perpetual advocate, and a moſt prevalent interceſſor with GOD in our behalf.

For inſtead of the various and endleſs ſacrifices of the jews and heathens, the Son of GOD hath "by "one ſacrifice for ſins perfected for ever them that

"are

" are ſanctified:" and inſtead of the mediation of dæmons and heroes, to offer up our prayers to GOD, which were the interceſſors made uſe of among the heathen, we have " one mediator between GOD " and men," appointed by GOD himſelf, even the " Son of GOD, who is entred into heaven itſelf, " there to appear in the preſence of GOD for us:" and to aſſure us that he commiſerates our caſe, and hath a true and tender ſenſe of our infirmities and ſufferings, the very manner of his interceſſion for us, as the ſcripture repreſents it to us, is a plain demonſtration of the thing: for he intercedes for us in heaven, by repreſenting to GOD his Father his ſufferings upon earth, and pleading them in our behalf: ſo that the very argument which he uſeth to GOD for us, cannot but ſtir up compaſſion in him towards us, and whilſt he repreſents his own ſufferings in our behalf, we cannot think that he is unmindful and inſenſible of ours. SERM. XLVI.

You ſee then that in this diſpenſation of GOD for our ſalvation, by ſending his Son in our nature, things that are not only ſuited in great condeſcenſion to our apprehenſions, but are likewiſe in great compaſſion to us every way fitted for our comfort and encouragement. GOD hath made him our great patron and advocate, who was our ſacrifice and propitiation. And ſurely we have all the reaſon in the world to believe, that he, who in the days of his fleſh humbled himſelf, and became obedient to the death for our ſakes, will be ready to do us all good offices now that he is advanced to the right hand of GOD; that he who died for us upon earth, now that he lives again will make interceſſion for us in heaven,

and

SERM. XLVI.

and perfect that salvation which he purchased for us upon the cross.

And therefore we find in scripture, that as the purchasing of our salvation is ascribed to the death and sufferings of CHRIST, so the perfecting of it is attributed to his intercession for us at the right hand of his Father: "Wherefore," says the apostle to the Hebrews, "he is able to save to the uttermost all those that "come to GOD by him, seeing he liveth for ever "to make intercession for us:" he died once to purchase these benefits, but he lives for ever to procure them for us, and to apply them to us: and now that he is in heaven, he is as intent upon our concernments, and lays our happiness as much to heart as when he dwelt here among us on earth, and poured out his blood a sacrifice for sin upon the cross: and that when he lived here below, he suffered and was tempted as we are; this very consideration gives us the greatest assurance possible, that he is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and hath a lively sense of our sufferings; and consequently, that he doth compassionate our case, and will use all his power and interest for our advantage, for our seasonable support and succour in all our trials and sufferings. But besides the wonderful condescension of this dispensation, there is likewise in the

Fifth and last place, a great congruity and fitness in the thing itself; and this method of our salvation which the wisdom of GOD hath pitched upon, is in many other respects very much for our real benefit and comfort. For by this means we have a perfect and familiar example of holiness and obedience in our own nature, by which we plainly see that GOD requires

SERM. XLVI.

requires nothing of us, but what he himſelf when he ſubmitted to become man did think fit to do: for "being made of a woman," he was of neceſſity "made under the law," and by aſſuming human nature, he became naturally ſubject to the laws and conditions of his being.

And here likewiſe is a proviſion made for the expiation and forgiveneſs of our ſins, in a way not only very honourable to the juſtice of GOD and the authority of his laws, but likewiſe very effectual to diſcountenance ſin and to deter men from it; ſince GOD did not think fit to forgive the ſins of men without great ſufferings, and that in our nature: for though GOD was willing to ſave the ſinner, yet rather than encouragement ſhould be given to ſin by letting it go unpuniſhed, he was contented to give up the "dearly beloved of his ſoul to be a ſacrifice "and propitiation for the ſins of the whole world."

By the ſame means alſo we have a moſt powerful antidote againſt the fear of ſuffering, and particularly againſt the fear of death, one of the greateſt ſlaveries of human nature: ſo alſo the apoſtle to the Hebrews tells us, "that for this cauſe CHRIST "himſelf alſo took part of fleſh and blood, that "by death he might deſtroy him that had the pow-"er of death, that is the devil; and might deliver "thoſe who through fear of death were all their "life-time ſubject to bondage." Heb. ii. 14, 15.

Again, we have hereby full aſſurance of a bleſſed immortality in another life, becauſe in our nature death and all the powers of darkneſs were baffled and overcome. The death of CHRIST, which could not have been without his incarnation, and like-

SERM. XLVI.

likewiſe his reſurrection from the dead, and his aſcenſion into heaven, are ſenſible demonſtrations to all mankind of a bleſſed immortality after death; which is the moſt powerful motive in the world to obedience and a holy life.

And laſtly, we may upon this account promiſe to our ſelves a fair and equal trial at the judgment of the great day, becauſe we ſhall then be judged by a man like our ſelves. Our SAVIOUR and judge himſelf hath told us, that for this reaſon "GOD hath "committed all judgment to the Son, becauſe he "is the Son of man." And this in human judgments is accounted a great privilege, to be judged by thoſe who are of the ſame rank and condition with our ſelves, and who are likely to underſtand beſt and moſt carefully to examine and conſider all our circumſtances, and to tender our caſe as if it were their own.

John v. 22, 27.

So equitably doth GOD deal with us, that we ſhall be acquitted or condemned by ſuch a judge, as according to human meaſures we our ſelves ſhould have choſen; by one in our own nature "who was "made in all things like unto us," that only excepted which would have rendered him incapable of being our judge, becauſe it would have made him a criminal like our ſelves. And therefore the apoſtle offers this as a firm ground of aſſurance to us that "GOD will judge the world in righteouſneſs," becauſe this judgment ſhall be adminiſtred by a man like our ſelves; "he hath," ſaith he, "appointed "a day wherein he will judge the world in righte-"ouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained, &c."

I ſhall

SERM. XLVI.

I ſhall now only make a practical inference or two from what hath been delivered upon this argument, and ſo conclude this whole diſcourſe.

Firſt, The ſerious conſideration of what hath been ſaid, concerning the incarnation of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, ſhould effectually prevail with us to comply with the great end and deſign of the Son of GOD's becoming man and dwelling amongſt us, and of his doing and ſuffering all thoſe things, which are recorded of him in the hiſtory of his life and death, written by the holy evangeliſts: I ſay, the conſideration hereof ſhould perſuade us all to comply with the great deſign of all this, which is the reformation of mankind, and the recovery of us out of that ſinful and miſerable eſtate into which we were fallen: becauſe the ſalvation, which the Son of GOD hath purchaſed for us, and which he offers to us by the goſpel, is not to be accompliſhed and brought about any other way than by our forſaking our ſins and reforming our lives. "The grace of GOD, "which hath appeared to all men and brings ſal-"vation," will not make us partakers of it in any other way, nor by any other means, than by "teaching us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly "luſts," and to "live ſoberly and righteouſly, and "godly in this preſent world." GOD ſent his Son "JESUS to bleſs us, by turning us away every "one from his iniquities;" and unleſs this change be effectually wrought in us, we are utterly incapable of all the bleſſings of the goſpel of CHRIST. All that he hath done for us without us will avail us nothing, unleſs we be inwardly transformed and "renewed in the ſpirit of our minds;" unleſs we be-

SERM. XLVI.

come new creatures; unleſs we make it the continual and ſincere endeavour of our lives to "keep the "commandments of GOD."

For the ſcripture is moſt expreſs and poſitive in this matter; that "without holineſs no man ſhall "ſee the LORD:" that "every man that hath this "hope in him," that is, in CHRIST to be ſaved by him, muſt "purifie himſelf even as he is pure." We do not rightly and truly believe "that JESUS "CHRIST came into the world to ſave ſinners," if we be not alſo thoroughly convinced, that it is as neceſſary for us to leave our ſins, as to believe this moſt faithful and credible ſaying.

Heb. xii. 14. 1 John iii. 3.

The obedience and ſufferings of our bleſſed SAVIOUR are indeed accounted to us for righteouſneſs, and will moſt certainly redound to our unſpeakable benefit and advantage upon our performance of the condition which the goſpel doth require on our part, namely, that "every man that names the name of CHRIST depart from iniquity:" and the grace of GOD's holy Spirit is ready to enable us to perform this condition, if we earneſtly aſk it, and do ſincerely co-operate with it: provided we do what we can on our part, GOD will not be wanting to us on his. But if we "receive the grace of GOD in vain," and take no care to perform the condition, and do neglect to implore the grace and aſſiſtance of God's holy Spirit to that purpoſe, we have none to blame but our ſelves; becauſe it is then wholly our own fault if we fall ſhort of that happineſs which CHRIST hath purchaſed, and promiſed to us upon ſuch eaſy and reaſonable conditions as the goſpel propoſeth.

But

SERM. XLVI.

But I no where find that GOD hath promiſed to force happineſs upon the negligent, and a reward upon the "wicked and ſlothful ſervant:" a gift may be given for nothing, but ſurely a reward does in the very nature of it always ſuppoſe ſome ſervice. None but a righteous man is capable of a righteous man's reward: and St. John hath ſufficiently cautioned us not to think our ſelves righteous unleſs we be "doers "of righteouſneſs: little children," ſays he, "let "no man deceive you, he that doth righteouſneſs "is righteous, even as he is righteous." This is ſo very plain a text, that if men were not either very eaſy to be deceived by others, or very willing to deceive themſelves, they could not poſſibly miſtake the meaning of it: and therefore I will repeat it once more, "little children, let no man deceive "you; he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even "as he is righteous." 1 John iii. 7.

Secondly, the other inference which I would make from the precedent diſcourſe is this, that with all poſſible thankfulneſs we ſhould acknowledge and adore the wonderful goodneſs and condeſcenſion of Almighty GOD in ſending his only begotten Son into the world in our nature, to be "made fleſh," and to "dwell amongſt us" in order to our recovery and ſalvation: a method and diſpenſation not only full of mercy and goodneſs, but of great condeſcenſion to our meanneſs, and of mighty virtue and efficacy for our redemption and deliverance from the guilt and dominion of ſin; and upon all accounts every way ſo much for our benefit and advantage. So that well may we ſay with St. Paul, "this is a "faithful ſaying," πιστὸς λόγος, a credible word, "and

SERM. XLVI.

" worthy of all acceptation," that is, fit to be embraced and entertained with all poſſible joy and thankfulneſs, " that JESUS CHRIST came into the " world to ſave ſinners."

What an everlaſting fountain of the moſt invaluable bleſſings and benefits to mankind is the incarnation of the Son of GOD? His vouchſafing to aſſume our nature, and to reſide and converſe ſo long with us? And what are we, that the eternal and only begotten Son of GOD ſhould condeſcend to do all this for us? That the high and glorious majeſty of heaven ſhould ſtoop down to the earth, and be contented to be clothed with miſery and mortality? That he ſhould ſubmit to ſo poor and low a condition, to ſuch dreadful and diſgraceful ſufferings for our ſakes? For what are we? Vile and deſpicable creatures, guilty and unworthy, offenders and apoſtates, enemies and rebels. Bleſſed GOD! how great is thy goodneſs? How infinite are thy tender mercies and compaſſions to mankind? That thou ſhouldſt regard us whilſt we neglected thee, and remember us in our low condition, when we had " forgotten thee " days without number;" and ſhouldſt take ſuch pity on us when we ſhewed none to our ſelves; and whilſt we were thy declared and implacable enemies, ſhouldſt expreſs more kindneſs and good-will to us, than the beſt of men ever did to their beſt friends.

When we reflect ſeriouſly upon thoſe great things which GOD hath done in our behalf, and conſider that mighty ſalvation which GOD hath wrought for us; what thanks can we poſſibly render, what acknowledgments ſhall we ever be able to make, I do not ſay equal, but in any wiſe meet and becoming,

to this great benefactor of mankind? Who, when we had ſo highly offended and provoked him, and ſo fooliſhly and ſo fatally undone ourſelves; when we were become ſo guilty and ſo miſerable, and ſo much fitter to have eternally been the objects of his wrath and indignation than of his pity and compaſſion, was pleaſed to ſend his own, his only Son into the world to ſeek and ſave us; and by him to repair all our ruins, to "forgive all our iniquities," to "heal all our ſpiritual diſeaſes, and to crown us with "loving-kindneſs and tender mercies." SERM. XLVI.

And what ſacrifices of praiſe and thankſgiving ſhould we alſo offer up to this gracious and moſt merciful redeemer of ours, the everlaſting Son of the Father, who debaſed himſelf ſo infinitely for our ſakes, and "when he took upon him to deliver "man did not abhor the virgin's womb:" who was contented to be born ſo obſcurely, and to live all his life in a poor and perſecuted condition; and was pleaſed both to undergo and to "overcome "the ſharpneſs of death, that he might open the "kingdom of heaven to all believers?"

Every time we have occaſion to meditate upon this, eſpecially when we are communicating at his holy table, and receiving the bleſſed ſymbols and pledges of his precious death and paſſion: how ſhould "our hearts burn within us" and leap for joy? How ſhould the remembrance of it revive and raiſe our ſpirits, and put us into an extaſy of love and gratitude, to this great friend and lover of ſouls: and with the bleſſed mother of our LORD, how ſhould our ſouls, upon that bleſſed occaſion, "magnify the "LORD, and our ſpirits rejoice in GOD our SA-"VIOUR?"

The

SERM. LXVI.

The holy men of old were tranſported with joy, at the obſcure and confuſed apprehenſion, and remote foreſight of ſo great a bleſſing, at ſo great a diſtance: it is ſaid of "Abraham the father of the "faithful, that he ſaw his day afar off and was "glad:" how ſhould we then be affected with joy and thankfulneſs, to whom the Son of GOD and bleſſed SAVIOUR of men is actually come? He is come many ages ago, and hath enlightened a great part of the world with his glory. Yea, he is come to us, who were in a manner ſeparated from the reſt of the world: to us is this great light come, who had ſo long "ſat in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of "death:" and this mighty ſalvation which he hath wrought for us, is near to every one of us that is willing to lay hold of it, and to accept it upon thoſe gracious terms and conditions, upon which it is offered to us in his holy goſpel.

And by his coming, he hath delivered mankind from that groſs ignorance and "thick darkneſs which "covered the nations: and we know that the Son "of GOD is come, and hath given us an under- "ſtanding to know him that is true: and we are in "him that is true, even in his Son JESUS CHRIST: "this is the true GOD, and eternal life." And then it immediately follows, "Little children, keep "yourſelves from idols." What can be the meaning of this caution? And what is the connexion of it with the foregoing diſcourſe? It is plainly this: that the Son of GOD by his coming had reſcued mankind from the ſottiſh worſhip of idols; and therefore he cautions Chriſtians to take great heed of relapſing into idolatry by worſhipping a creature, or the

t John v. 20.

Ver. 21.

the image and likeneſs of any creature inſtead of GOD. And becauſe he foreſaw that it might be objected to Chriſtians, as in fact it was afterwards by the heathen, that the worſhip of CHRIST, who was a man, was as much idolatry as that which the Chriſtians charged the heathen withal: therefore St. John effectually to prevent the force of this plauſible objection, though he perpetually, throughout his goſpel, declares CHRIST to be really a man, yet he expreſly alſo affirms him to be GOD, and the true GOD; and conſequently, Chriſtians might ſafely pay divine worſhip to him without fear or danger of idolatry: "We are in him that is true, even in "his Son JESUS CHRIST: this is the true GOD, and "eternal life: little children, keep yourſelves from "idols." SERM. XLVI.

But this I am ſenſible is a digreſſion, yet ſuch a one as may not be altogether uſeleſs.

To proceed then in the recital of thoſe great bleſſings, which the coming of the Son of GOD hath brought to mankind. He hath reſcued us from the bondage of ſin, and from the ſlavery of Satan: he hath openly proclaimed pardon and reconciliation to the world: he hath clearly revealed eternal life to us, which was but obſcurely made known before, both to Jews and Gentiles; "but is now made ma-"nifeſt by the appearance of our LORD and SAVI-"OUR JESUS CHRIST, who hath aboliſhed death, "and brought life and immortality to light by the "goſpel:" he hath purchaſed this great bleſſing for us; and is ready to confer it upon us, if we will be contented to leave our ſins and to be ſaved by him: a condition without which as ſalvation is not

to

SERM. XLVI.

to be had, ſo if it were, it would not be deſirable, it could not make us happy; becauſe our ſins would ſtill ſeparate between GOD and us, and the guilt and horror of our own minds would make us eternally miſerable.

And now ſurely we cannot but thus judge, that all the praiſes and acknowledgments, all the ſervice and obedience, which we can poſſibly render to him, are infinitely beneath thoſe infinite obligations which the Son of GOD hath laid upon the ſons of men, by his "coming into the world to ſave ſinners."

What then remains, but that at all times, and more eſpecially at this ſeaſon, we gratefully acknowledge and joyfully commemorate this great and amazing goodneſs of GOD to us, in the incarnation of his Son for the redemption and ſalvation of the ſinful and miſerable race of mankind? A method and diſpenſation of the divine grace and wiſdom, not only full of mercy and condeſcenſion, but of great power and virtue to purify our hearts and to reform our lives; to beget in us a fervent love of GOD our SAVIOUR, and a perfect hatred and deteſtation of our ſins, and a ſtedfaſt purpoſe and reſolution to lead a new life, following the commandments of GOD, and walking in his ways all the days of our life. In a word, a method that is every way calculated for our unſpeakable benefit and comfort.

Since then the Son of GOD hath ſo graciouſly condeſcended to be "made in all things like unto "us, ſin only excepted;" let us aſpire to be as like to him as is poſſible in the exemplary holineſs and virtues of his life. We cannot be like him in his miracles, but we may in his mercy and compaſſion:

we

we cannot imitate his divine power, but we may reſemble him in his innocency and humility, in his meekneſs and patience. And as he aſſumed human nature, ſo let us re-aſſume humanity, which we have in great meaſure depraved and put off; and let us "put on bowels of mercy" towards thoſe that are in miſery, and be ready to relieve the poor for his ſake, "who being rich, for our ſakes became poor, that "we through his poverty might be made rich."

To conclude, let us imitate him in that which was his great work and buſineſs here upon earth, and which of all other did beſt become the Son of GOD; I mean in his "going about doing good:" that by giving glory to GOD in the higheſt, and by endeavouring as much as in us lies to procure and promote "peace on earth, and good will amongſt "men," we may at laſt be "made meet to be "partakers of the inheritance of the ſaints in "light:" through the mercies and merits of our bleſſed SAVIOUR and Redeemer. Amen.

"Almighty GOD, who haſt given us thy only "begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as "at this time to be born of a pure virgin: grant "that we, being regenerate and made thy children "by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by "thy holy Spirit; through the ſame our LORD JE-"SUS CHRIST, who liveth and reigneth with thee "and the ſame Spirit, ever one GOD, world without "end. Amen."

SERMON XLVII.

Concerning the Sacrifice and Satisfaction of CHRIST, &c.

HEB. ix. 26.

But now once hath he appeared in the end of the world, to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

SERM. XLVII.

AMONG many other great ends and reasons, for which GOD was pleased to send his Son into the world to dwell amongst us, this was one of the chief, that by a long course of the greatest innocency and the greatest sufferings in our nature, he might be capable to make a perfect expiation of sin: "but now once in the end of the world," ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, in the conclusion of the ages, that is in the last age of the world, which is the gospel age, "hath he appeared to take away sin by the "sacrifice of himself."

The general design of GOD in sending his Son into the world, was to save mankind from eternal death and misery, and to purchase for us eternal life and happiness. So the author of our salvation himself tells us, "that GOD so loved the world, that "he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever "believeth in him should not perish, but have "everlasting life."

John iii. 16.

Now

Now in order to the procuring of this salvation for us, the impediments and hindrances of it were to be removed: these were the guilt and the dominion of sin: by the guilt of sin we were become obnoxious to the wrath of GOD and to eternal condemnation; and by the defilement and dominion of it, we were incapable of the happiness of heaven and the reward of eternal life.

To remove these two great hindrances two things were necessary: the forgiveness of sins past, in order to our deliverance from the wrath of GOD and the eternal torments of the next life; and the reformation of our hearts and lives, to make us capable of eternal life and happiness in another world. And both these, if GOD had so pleased, might, for any thing we certainly know to the contrary, have been effected by the abundant mercy and powerful grace of GOD, without this wonderful method and dispensation of sending his Son in our nature "to "take away sin by the sacrifice of himself:" but it seems the wisdom of GOD thought fit to pitch upon this way and method of our salvation, and no doubt for very good reasons; amongst which, these three seem to be very obvious and very considerable.

First, to vindicate the honour of his laws, which, if sin had gone altogether unpunished, would have been in great danger of falling into contempt. For if GOD had proclaimed a general pardon of sin to all mankind, without any testimony of his wrath and displeasure against it, who would have had any great veneration for his laws, or have believed in good earnest, that the violation of them had either

SERM. XLVII.

been ſo extremely offenſive to him, or ſo very dangerous to the ſinner?

Therefore to maintain the honour of his laws, rather than ſin ſhould paſs unpuniſhed, GOD would lay the puniſhment of it upon his only begotten Son, the deareſt perſon to him in the world: which is a greater teſtimony of his high diſpleaſure againſt ſin, and of his tender regard and concernment for the honour of his laws, than if the ſinner had ſuffered the puniſhment due to it in his own perſon.

Secondly, another reaſon of this diſpenſation, and that likewiſe very conſiderable, was, that GOD might forgive ſin in ſuch a way as yet effectually to diſcountenance and diſcourage it, and to create in us the greateſt horror and hatred of it: which could not have been by an abſolute pardon, without any puniſhment inflicted, or ſatisfaction made to the honour of his juſtice. For had ſin been ſo eaſily forgiven, who would have been ſenſible of the great evil of it, or afraid to offend for the future?

But when GOD makes his own Son a ſacrifice, and lays upon him the puniſhment due for the iniquities of us all, this is a demonſtration that GOD hates ſin as much, if it be poſſible, as he loved his own Son. For this plainly ſhews what ſin deſerves, and what the ſinner may juſtly expect, if after this ſeverity of GOD againſt it he will venture to commit it.

And if this ſacrifice for ſin, and the pardon purchaſed by it, be not effectual to reclaim us from ſin, and to beget in us an eternal dread and deteſtation of it: if we ſin wilfully after ſo clear a revelation of the "wrath of GOD from heaven againſt all un-

"godlineſs

SERM. XLVII.

" godlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men," there remains " no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a certain " fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indig- " nation to conſume the adverſaries." For what could GOD do more to teſtify his diſpleaſure againſt ſin, and to diſcountenance the practice of it, than to make his only Son an offering for ſin, and to give him up to be wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed for our iniquities? In what clearer glaſs can we at once behold the great evil and demerit of ſin, and the infinite goodneſs and mercy of GOD to ſinners, than in the ſorrows and ſufferings of the Son of GOD for our ſins and for our ſakes?

Thirdly, another reaſon of this diſpenſation ſeems to have been a gracious condeſcenſion and compliance of Almighty GOD with a certain apprehenſion and perſuaſion, which had very early and univerſally obtained among mankind, concerning the expiation of ſin, and appeaſing the offended deity by ſacrifices: by the ſacrifices of living creatures, of birds and beaſts; and afterwards by human ſacrifices and " the blood of their ſons and daughters:" by offering to GOD, as the expreſſion is in the prophet, " their firſt-born for their tranſgreſſion, and the fruit " of their body for the ſin of their ſouls."

And this notion of the expiation of ſin by ſacrifice, whether it had it's firſt riſe from divine revelation, and was afterwards propagated from age to age by tradition: I ſay, from whenceſoever this notion came, it hath of all other notions concerning religion, excepting thoſe of the being of GOD and his providence, and of the recompences of another life, found the moſt univerſal reception, and the thing

SERM. XLVII.

thing hath been the moſt generally practiſed in all ages and nations, not only in the old, but in the new diſcovered parts of the world.

And indeed a very great part of the jewiſh religion, which was inſtituted by GOD himſelf, ſeems to have been a plain condeſcenſion to the general apprehenſion of mankind, concerning this way of appeaſing the offended deity by ſacrifices: as it was alſo a figure of that great and efficacious ſacrifice, which ſhould in due time be offered to GOD to make atonement once for all for the ſins of all mankind.

And the apoſtle to the Hebrews doth very particularly inſiſt upon this condeſcenſion of GOD to them, in the diſpenſation of the goſpel: and whereas they apprehended ſo great a neceſſity of an high-prieſt and of ſacrifices to make expiation for the ſins of the people, that it was an eſtabliſhed principle among them, that "without ſhedding of blood "there was no remiſſion of ſins:" GOD was pleaſed to comply ſo far with theſe notions and apprehenſions of theirs, as to make his own Son both a prieſt and a ſacrifice, to do that once for all which their own high-prieſt pretended to do year by year.

And from hence the ſame apoſtle takes occaſion to recommend to them the new covenant and diſpenſation of the goſpel, as having a greater and more perfect high-prieſt and a more excellent ſacrifice, than were the high-prieſts and the ſacrifices under the law; the Son of GOD having "by one ſacrifice of him-"ſelf obtained eternal redemption for us, and per-"fected for ever them that are ſanctified."

And this apprehenſion prevailed no leſs in the heathen world, and proceeded to the ſacrifices of men,

men, even of their firſt-born. And with this apprehenſion, not to countenance but to aboliſh it, GOD was pleaſed to comply ſo far as to make a general atonement for the ſins of mankind by the death of his Son, appearing in our nature to become a voluntary ſacrifice for us: GOD permitting him to be unjuſtly put to death, and his blood to be ſhed by the malice of men, in appearance as a malefactor, but in truth as a martyr; and accepting of his death as a meritorious ſacrifice and "propitiation for the "ſins of the whole world:" that by this wiſe counſel and permiſſion of his providence he might for ever put an end to that barbarous and inhuman way of ſerving GOD, which had been ſo long in uſe and practice among them: the Son of GOD by the voluntary ſacrifice of himſelf having effected all that at once, and for ever, which mankind from the beginning of the world had in vain been endeavouring to accompliſh by innumerable and continual ſacrifices; namely, the pardon of their ſins, and perfect peace and reconciliation with GOD. SERM. XLVII.

For theſe ends and reaſons, and perhaps for many more as great and conſiderable as theſe, which our ſhallow underſtandings are not able to fathom, the wiſdom of GOD hath pitched upon this way and method of delivering mankind from the guilt and dominion of ſin by the ſacrifice of his Son. And to this end it was requiſite that he ſhould appear in our nature, and dwell amongſt us for ſome conſiderable time, that by a long courſe of the greateſt innocency and of the greateſt ſufferings in our nature he might be capable of making a perfect expiation of ſin.

So

SERM. XLVII.

So that two things were requiſite to qualify him for this purpoſe; perfect innocency and obedience, and great ſufferings in our nature, even to the ſuffering of death. Both theſe the ſcripture declares to be neceſſary qualifications of a perſon capable to make expiation of ſin; and both theſe were found in the perſon of our bleſſed SAVIOUR.

Firſt, unſpotted innocency and perfect obedience. This the ſcripture teſtifies concerning him, and the whole courſe of his life and actions. "He was in "all points tempted like as we are, yet without "ſin," ſaith the apoſtle to the Hebrews. "He "always did the things which pleaſed GOD," as he teſtifies concerning himſelf, "and we are ſure that "his witneſs is true." "He did no ſin, neither was "guile found in his mouth," as St. Peter tells us of him. And this was neceſſary to qualify him for the perfect expiation of ſin, whether we conſider him as a prieſt, or as a ſacrifice.

Heb. iv. 15.

John viii. 29.

1 Pet. ii. 15.

As a prieſt, he could not have been fit to make expiation for the ſins of others, had he not been without ſin himſelf. And this, the apoſtle tells us, is one great advantage of our high-prieſt under the goſpel, above the high-prieſt under the law, who being a ſinner himſelf, as well as thoſe for whom he offered, had need to offer for himſelf before he could make ſo much as a legal expiation for the ſins of others: but a perfect and effectual expiation of ſin, ſo as to purge the conſcience from the guilt of it, cannot be made but by an high prieſt who is holy and innocent himſelf; "For ſuch an high-prieſt," ſaith the apoſtle, "became us," that is, now under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, when a perfect ex-

Heb. vii. 26, 27.

piation of sins is to be made, such an high-priest is necessary, "as is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate "from sinners, who needs not as those high-priests," that is, as the high-priests under the law, "to of- "fer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for "the people:" the plain force of which argument is this, that he, who will be qualified to make atonement for the sins of others, must be without sin himself. SERM. XLVII.

And then if we consider CHRIST as a sacrifice for sin, perfect holiness is necessary to make a sacrifice acceptable and available for the expiation of sin. The necessity of this was typified by the quality of the expiatory sacrifices under the law: the beasts that were to be offered were to be "without spot "and blemish:" to which the apostle alludes, speaking of the quality and efficacy of the sacrifice of CHRIST: "How much more," says he, "shall "the blood of CHRIST, who through the eternal "Spirit offered himself without spot to GOD, purge "your consciences from dead works to serve the liv- "ing GOD?" And to the same purpose St. Peter, "Forasmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with "corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the "precious blood of CHRIST, as of a lamb without "blemish and without spot, &c." hereby intimating, that nothing less than the perfect innocency and holiness of him who was to be a sacrifice for us could have expiated the guilt of our sins, and purchased eternal redemption for us. Heb. ix. 14. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

Secondly, great sufferings likewise in our nature, even to the suffering of death, were requisite to the perfect expiation of sin: I say, even to the suffering

SERM. XLVII.

of death. For the ſacrifices which were to make expiation were to be ſlain. And it was a conſtant maxim and principle among the Jews, and the apoſtle more than once in this epiſtle ſeems to allow and confirm it, that "without ſhedding of blood there "is no remiſſion of ſins."

Not that GOD could not have pardoned ſin without ſatisfaction made to his juſtice, either by the ſuffering of the ſinner himſelf, or of a ſacrifice in his ſtead: but, according to the method and diſpenſation which the wiſdom of GOD had pitched upon, he was reſolved not to diſpenſe forgiveneſs in any other way. For which reaſon he ſeems either to have poſſeſſed mankind with this principle, or to have permitted them to be ſo perſuaded, that "ſin "was not to be expiated but by blood," that is, either by the death of the ſinner, or of the ſacrifice.

Now the life of our bleſſed SAVIOUR, as well as his death, was made up of ſufferings of one kind or other: continual ſufferings from his cradle to his croſs, from the time he drew his firſt breath, to his giving up the ghoſt: and not only continual ſufferings, but the greateſt that ever were, conſidering the dignity of the perſon that ſuffered, and the nature of the ſufferings: conſidering likewiſe that theſe ſufferings were not only wholly undeſerved on his part, but unmerited alſo on ours, for whoſe ſake he ſubmitted himſelf to them: Nay, on the contrary, he had obliged to the utmoſt thoſe for whom and by whom he ſuffered, and continued ſtill to oblige them by the greateſt bleſſings and benefits purchaſed and procured for them by thoſe very ſufferings which with ſo much malice and cruelty they inflicted on him. Had

SERM. XLVII.

Had our bleſſed SAVIOUR been a mere man, the perfect innocency and unſpotted purity of his whole life; his zeal to do the will of GOD, and his delight in doing it; his infinite pains and unwearied diligence in "going about doing good:" his conſtant obedience to GOD in the moſt difficult inſtances, and his perſeverance in well-doing, notwithſtanding the ill uſage and hard meaſure, the bitter reproaches and perſecutions he met withal for it, from a wicked and ill-natured world: his perfect ſubmiſſion to the will of GOD, his invincible patience under the greateſt and bittereſt ſufferings, and his infinite charity to his enemies and perſecutors: theſe muſt needs be highly acceptable to GOD, and, if man could merit of GOD, likely enough to be available for the ſins of others.

But our SAVIOUR and our ſacrifice being the Son of GOD in our nature; and he voluntarily aſſuming it, and ſubmitting to the condition of humanity in it's loweſt and moſt miſerable ſtate, ſin only excepted; and his being contented to live a life of doing good and ſuffering evil, and at laſt to be put to death and ſlain a ſacrifice for us: the dignity of the perſon who did and ſuffered all this for us, and his dearneſs to GOD, muſt needs add a mighty value to ſo perfect an obedience and ſuch patient ſufferings; ſo as to render them a full, perfect and ſufficient ſacrifice, oblation and ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world.

And all this being willingly performed in our nature, and accepted by GOD as done upon our account, may reaſonably be preſumed to redound to our benefit and advantage, as much as if we our

SERM. XLVII

ſelves had performed it in our own perſons: nothing being ſo proper and ſo available to make an honourable amends and ſatisfaction to the juſtice of GOD for the ſins of all mankind, as the voluntary obedience and ſufferings of human nature in a perſon of ſo great dignity and dearneſs to GOD as his eternal and entirely beloved Son.

Now that expiation of ſin was made by the ſufferings of CHRIST in our ſtead, I ſhall endeavour to make good theſe three ways.

Firſt, from plain teſtimonies of holy ſcripture, declaring this matter to us as clearly and fully as it is poſſible for words to do it.

Secondly, from the nature and intention of expiatory ſacrifices, both among the Jews and heathen; to which the death of CHRIST is in the new teſtament ſo frequently compared, and in point of virtue and efficacy to take away ſin infinitely preferred to it.

Thirdly, by vindicating this method and diſpenſation of the divine wiſdom from the objections which are brought againſt it; and by ſhewing that there is nothing in it that is unreaſonable, or any wiſe unworthy of GOD.

I. I ſhall produce ſome plain teſtimonies of holy ſcripture which declare this matter as clearly and fully as it is poſſible for words to do it; namely, that the Son of GOD, in order to the effectual expiation of ſin, ſuffered in our ſtead, and bore the wrath of GOD for us, and made a perfect atonement for ſin, and obtained eternal redemption for us.

This the ſcripture declares to us in great variety of expreſſions; as, that "CHRIST died for us," and "for our ſins;" that he was "a ſacrifice for

"us,"

SERM. XLVII.

"us," and "a propitiation for the sins of the whole "world," that is, of all mankind; that "he bare "our sins in his own body on the tree," and "appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" that "we are justified in his blood," and "redeemed by the price of it;" and in very many other expressions to the same purpose.

And this is so evidently the scope and meaning of these expressions, that it cannot be denied without offering the greatest violence imaginable to the holy scriptures. For can any man think that GOD would have used so many expressions in scripture, the plain and most obvious sense of all which is, that the Son of GOD suffered for our sins and in our stead, if this had not been his design and meaning? Would not this be in effect to say, that GOD had written a great book to puzzle and confound, but not to instruct and teach mankind?

I will at present single out some few of those many texts of scripture, which might be produced to this purpose: "he hath made him to be sin for us, "who knew no sin," that is, he had made him who had no sin himself a sacrifice for our sins. Again; "and walk in love, as CHRIST also hath "loved us and given himself for us, an offering and "a sacrifice to GOD." St. Peter to the same purpose tells us, that "CHRIST also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might "bring us to GOD, being put to death in the flesh:" here CHRIST is said to have suffered for sin; and to declare that the apostle did not only mean that CHRIST suffered upon the occasion of our sins, but that he suffered in the place and stead of the sinner,

2 Cor. v. 21. Eph. v. 1. 1 Pet. iii. 18.

SERM. XLVII.

he adds, " the juſt for the unjuſt," that is, the Son of GOD, who was innocent and had no ſin, ſuffered for us who were ſinners; or as it is elſewhere expreſſed, " he bare our ſins in his own body on the " tree."

It is true indeed, that CHRIST ſuffered for our benefit and advantage; which the Socinians would have to be all that is meant in the texts which I have cited: but then it ought to be conſidered, that CHRIST's ſuffering for our benefit and advantage does by no means exclude, nor is any wiſe inconſiſtent with his ſuffering in our ſtead. For whoever ſuffers in another man's ſtead, and to ſave him from ſuffering, does undoubtedly ſuffer for his benefit and advantage, and gives the beſt demonſtration of it that can be: but the manner of the expreſſion, if compared with other parallel texts of ſcripture, and eſpecially with what is ſo often ſaid of our SAVIOUR's being a ſacrifice, which I ſhall have occaſion farther to urge by and by: I ſay, the manner of the expreſſion, if well conſidered, will appear to any man that is not contentious to ſignify our SAVIOUR's ſuffering inſtead of the ſinner.

But not to argue from words and phraſes, I will produce two texts which declare this matter ſo plainly, that the force of them is not to be avoided, without the moſt ſhameful wreſting and perverting of them. " This is my commandment," ſays our SAVIOUR, " that you love one another, as I have " loved you." How is that? He declares in the next words, " Greater love than this hath no man, " that a man lay down his life for his friend," that is, that he be contented to die in his ſtead. And to

John xv. 12.

Ver. 13.

the

the same purpose St. Paul, " For when ye were yet " sinners in due time CHRIST died for the un- " godly:" now the question is, whether by this expression of " CHRIST's dying for the ungodly," be meant only his dying for the benefit and advantage of sinners, but not his dying in their stead? This, let the words which immediately follow determine: " For scarcely for a righteous man will " one die, yet peradventure for a good man one " would even dare to die: but GOD commendeth " his love to us, in that whilst we were yet sinners " CHRIST died for us." And now I appeal to any man of good sense, whether it be not plain that the apostle here speaks of CHRIST's dying for sinners in the same sense as one man is said to die for another, that is, to save another from death; which what is it else but to die in his stead? He that can deny this, is perverse to the highest degree, and I fear almost beyond the possibility of being convinced. Rom. vi. 6, 7, 8.

And the argument from these two texts is so much the stronger, because we do not here reason merely from the phrase and expression, but from the main scope of our SAVIOUR's discourse in the one, and of St. Paul's in the other. For the design of both, is to recommend the superlative love of CHRIST to us, above the greatest love that ever any man expressed to another. The highest pitch that human affection did ever rise to, was for a man to lay down his life for his friend; but the Son of GOD laid down his life for his enemies. " Scarcely," says St. Paul, " would one lay down his life for a righteous man," that is, for one who is but strictly just and honest, and does no body wrong; but for a good man, that is,

is, for one that is kind and beneficial to all, and hath obliged mankind by great benefits, ſome one may be found that would lay down his life to ſave the life of ſuch a perſon: but the love of CHRIST hath gone far beyond this: he "died for ſinners," for thoſe who were neither good men nor righteous: "But GOD commendeth his love to us, in that "whilſt we were yet ſinners CHRIST died for us." Now where doth the force of this argument lye, if not in this? That CHRIST hath done that for us, who were enemies and ſinners, which ſome very few perſons in the world have done for their friend, or for ſome very eminently good man: and what is that? Why they have laid down their lives in their ſtead: and ſo CHRIST hath done for us. This ſeems to be ſo very plain, that I do not ſee how the force of this argument is poſſible to be avoided.

It is evident then from ſcripture, that CHRIST died not only for our advantage but in our ſtead; as truly and really as any man ever did or can die for another, who lays down his own life to ſave another from death. For if CHRIST had not died, we had periſhed everlaſtingly; and becauſe he died, we are ſaved from eternal death and miſery.

And though this be no where in ſcripture ſpoken of by the name or term of ſatisfaction, yet it is ſaid to be the price of our redemption; which ſurely is the ſame thing in effect with ſatisfaction. For as we are ſinners we are liable, and, as I may ſay, indebted to the juſtice of GOD: and the Son of GOD, by his death and ſufferings in our nature, hath diſcharged this obligation and paid this debt for us: which diſcharge ſince it was obtained for us by the ſhedding

of

of CHRIST's blood, and the ſcripture tells us, that SERM. XLVII.
" without ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion
" of ſins:" and ſince GOD is graciouſly pleaſed to accept of it for the debt which we owed to his juſtice, and to declare himſelf fully pleaſed and contented with it; why it may not properly enough be called payment or ſatisfaction, I confeſs I am not able to underſtand. Men may eternally wrangle about any thing, but what a frivolous contention, what a trifling in ſerious matters, what barretry in divinity is this?

Not that GOD was angry with his Son, when he thus " laid on him the iniquities of us all:" no, he was always well pleaſed with him; and never better, than when he " became obedient to the death, even " the death of the croſs," and " bore our ſins in " his own body on the tree."

Nor yet that our SAVIOUR ſuffered the very ſame that the ſinner ſhould have ſuffered, namely, the proper pains and torment of the damned: but that his obedience and ſufferings were of that value and eſteem with GOD, and his voluntary ſacrifice of himſelf ſo well pleaſing to him, that he thereupon entered into a covenant of grace and mercy with mankind, wherein he hath engaged himſelf to forgive the ſins of thoſe who believe and repent, and to make them partakers of eternal life. And hence the " blood of CHRIST" which was ſhed for us upon the croſs, is called " the blood of the cove-" nant," as being the ſanction of that new covenant, into which GOD is entred with mankind: and not only the ſanction and confirmation of that covenant, but the very foundation of it: for which

SERM. XLVII.

reaſon the cup in the LORD's ſupper is called the new teſtament, or, as the word ſhould rather be rendered, " the new covenant in his blood, which was " ſhed for many for the remiſſion of ſins." I proceed now to the

II. IId Thing propounded, which was to ſhew that the expiation of our ſins was made by the ſufferings of CHRIST, from the nature and intention of expiatory ſacrifices, both among the Jews and Heathens; to which the death of CHRIST is in the new teſtament ſo frequently compared, and in point of virtue and efficacy to take away ſin infinitely preferred to it.

Now the nature and deſign of expiatory ſacrifices was plainly this: to ſubſtitute one living creature to ſuffer and die inſtead of another; ſo that what the ſinner deſerved to have ſuffered, was ſuppoſed to be done to the ſacrifice, that is, it was ſlain to make an atonement for the ſinner.

And though there was no reaſon to hope for any ſuch effect from the blood of bulls or goats, or of any other living creatures that were wont to be offered up in ſacrifice; yet that both Jews and Heathen did expect and hope for it, is ſo very evident, that it cannot without extreme ignorance or obſtinacy be denied.

But this expectation, how unreaſonable ſoever, plainly ſhews it to have been the common apprehenſion of mankind, in all ages, that GOD would not be appeaſed, nor ſhould ſin be pardoned, without ſuffering: but yet ſo that men generally conceived good hopes, that upon the repentance of ſinners GOD would accept of a vicarious puniſhment; that is,

is, of the suffering of some other in their stead. And very probably, as I said before, in compliance with this apprehension of mankind, and in condescension to it, as well as for other weighty reasons best known to the divine wisdom, GOD was pleased to find out such a sacrifice as should really and effectually procure for them that great blessing of the forgiveness of sins, which they had so long hoped for from the multitude of their own sacrifices.

And the apostle to the Hebrews doth in a large discourse shew the great virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice of CHRIST, to the purpose of remission of sins, above that of the sacrifices under the law: and that the death of CHRIST is really and effectually to our advantage, all that which the sacrifices under the law were supposed to be to the sinner: "but now once," saith the apostle here in the text, "in the end of the world, hath he appeared to "take away sin by the sacrifice of himself." This is the great virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice of CHRIST, that whatever was expected from any other sacrifices, either by Jews or Heathens, was really effected by this.

This was plainly signified by the Jewish passover, wherein the lamb was slain, and the sinner did escape and was passed by. In allusion whereto, St. Paul makes no scruple to call CHRIST our passover or paschal lamb, who was slain that we might escape: "CHRIST our passover," says he, "is slain, or of- 1 Cor. v. "fered for us;" that is, he by the gracious appoint- 7. ment of GOD was substituted to suffer all that in our stead, which the paschal lamb was supposed to suffer for the sinner.

SERM. XLVII.

And this was likewiſe ſignified by the ſinner's laying his hand upon the ſacrifice that was to be ſlain, thereby as it were transferring the puniſhment which was due to himſelf upon the ſacrifice that was to be ſlain and offered up. For ſo GOD tells Moſes, that the ſinner, who came to offer an expiatory ſacrifice, ſhould do: "He ſhall put his hand "upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it ſhall "be accepted for him, to make an atonement for "him." And the apoſtle tells us, that it was an eſtabliſhed principle in the Jewiſh religion, that "without ſhedding of blood there was no remiſſion "of ſins:" which plainly ſhews that they expected this benefit of the remiſſion of ſins, from the blood of their ſacrifices.

Lev. i. 4.

And then he tells us, that we are really made partakers of this benefit by the blood of CHRIST, and by the virtue of his ſacrifice: and again, "CHRIST," ſays he, "was once offered to bear the ſins of many;" plainly alluding to the ſacrifices under the law, which did, as it were, bear the faults of the ſinner.

Heb. ix. 28.

And that this expreſſion, of CHRIST's being "offered to bear our ſins," cannot be meant of his taking away our ſins by his holy doctrine which was confirmed by his death, but of his bearing our ſins by way of imputation, and by his ſuffering for them in our ſtead, as the ſacrifice was ſuppoſed to do for the ſinner: this, I ſay, is evident beyond all denial, from the oppoſition which follows after the text, between his firſt appearance and his ſecond; "CHRIST," ſays our apoſtle, "was once offered "to bear our ſins; but unto them that look for him "he ſhall appear a ſecond time without ſin unto "ſalvation."

Ver. 28.

" salvation." Why? Did he not appear the first time without sin? Yes certainly, as to any inherent guilt; for the scripture tells us, "he had no sin." What then is the meaning of the opposition, that at his first coming "he bore our sins," but at his second coming "he shall appear without sin unto "salvation?" These words can have no other imaginable sense but this, that at his first coming he sustained the person of a sinner and suffered instead of us; but his second coming shall be upon another account, and "he shall appear without sin unto "salvation;" that is, not as a sacrifice, but as a judge, to confer the reward of eternal life upon those who are partakers of the benefit of that sacrifice, which he offered to GOD for us "in the days of "his flesh." I proceed to the SERM. XLVII.

IIId Thing I proposed, and which yet remains to be spoken to; namely, to vindicate this method and dispensation of the divine wisdom from the objections which are brought against it; and to shew that there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or any wise unworthy of GOD. I shall mention four objections which are commonly urged in this matter, and I think they are all that are considerable. III.

First, That this method, of the expiation of sin by the sufferings of CHRIST, seems to argue some defect and want of goodness in GOD, as if he needed some external motive, and were not of himself disposed to forgive sinners. Obj. 1st.

To which I think the answer is not difficult, namely, that GOD did not want goodness to have forgiven sin freely and without any satisfaction, but his wisdom did not think it meet to give encouragement

SERM. XLVII.

ment to ſin by too eaſy a forgiveneſs, and without ſome remarkable teſtimony of his ſevere diſpleaſure againſt it: and therefore his greater goodneſs and compaſſion to mankind deviſed this way to ſave the ſinner, without giving the leaſt countenance and encouragement to ſin.

For GOD to think of ſaving us any way, was exceſſive goodneſs and mercy; but to think of doing it in this way, by ſubſtituting his dearly beloved Son to ſuffer in our ſtead, is a condeſcenſion ſo very amazing, that if GOD had not been pleaſed of his own goodneſs to ſtoop to it, it had almoſt been blaſphemy in man to have thought of it, or deſired it.

Obj. 2d. Secondly, How can our ſins be ſaid to have been forgiven freely, if the pardon of them was purchaſed at ſo dear a rate and ſo mighty a price was paid for it?

In anſwer to this I deſire theſe two things may be conſidered. 1ſt, That it is a wonderful grace and favour of GOD, to admit of this tranſlation of the puniſhment which was due to us, and to accept of the ſufferings of another in our ſtead, and for our benefit; when he might juſtly have exacted it of us in our own perſons: ſo that even in this reſpect we are, as St. Paul ſays, "juſtified freely by his grace, "through the redemption that is in JESUS CHRIST:" and freely too in reſpect of any neceſſity that lay upon GOD to forgive us in this or any other way. It was a free act of his goodneſs to ſave us, even by the ſatisfaction and ſufferings of his own Son. 2dly, It was in effect freely too, notwithſtanding the mighty price which was paid for our redemption.

Becauſe

Becauſe this price was not of our own procuring, but of GOD's providing; he "found out this ran- "ſom for us." And will any man ſay, that a prince who prevails with his ſon to intercede for the pardon of a rebel, yea and to ſuffer ſome puniſhment or to pay a fine for the obtaining of it, does not in effect and in all equitable and grateful conſtruction forgive him freely? SERM. XLVII.

Thirdly, it is yet further objected, that this ſeems to be more unreaſonable than the ſacrificing of beaſts among the Jews, nay, than the ſacrificing of men among the heathen, and even of their own ſons and daughters: becauſe this is the offering up of the "Son of GOD," the moſt innocent and the moſt excellent perſon that ever was. Obj. 3d.

To which I anſwer, that if we conſider the manner, and the deſign of it, the thing will appear to be quite otherwiſe.

As to the manner of it, GOD did not command his Son to be ſacrificed, but his providence permitted the wickedneſs and violence of men to put him to death: and then his goodneſs and wiſdom did over-rule this worſt of actions to the beſt of ends. And if we conſider the matter aright, how is this any more a reflection upon the holy providence of GOD, than any enormities and cruelties which by his permiſſion are daily committed in the world?

And then if we conſider the end and deſign of this permiſſion of CHRIST's death, and the application of it to the purpoſe of a general expiation; we cannot but acknowledge, and even adore the gracious and merciful deſign of it. For by this means GOD did at once put an end to that unreaſonable

and

SERM. XLVII.

and bloody way of worſhip, which had been ſo long practiſed in the world: and after this one ſacrifice, which was ſo infinitely dear to GOD, the benefit of expiation was not to be expected in any other way; all other ſacrifices being worthleſs and vain in compariſon of this: and it hath ever ſince obtained this effect, of making all other ſacrifices to ceaſe, in all parts of the world where Chriſtianity hath prevailed.

Obj. 4th. Fourthly, the laſt objection is, the injuſtice and cruelty of an innocent perſon's ſuffering inſtead of the offender.

To this I anſwer, that they who make ſo great a noiſe with this objection do ſeem to me to give a full and clear anſwer to it themſelves, by acknowledging, as they conſtantly and expreſly do, that our SAVIOUR ſuffered all this for our benefit and advantage, though not in our place and ſtead. For this, to my apprehenſion, is plainly to give up the cauſe, unleſs they can ſhew a good reaſon why there is not as much injuſtice and cruelty in an innocent perſon's ſuffering for the benefit and advantage of a malefactor, as in his ſuffering in his ſtead: ſo little do men, in the heat of diſpute and oppoſition, who are reſolved to hold faſt an opinion in deſpite of reaſon and good ſenſe, conſider, that they do many times in effect, and by neceſſary conſequence, grant the very thing which in expreſs terms they do ſo ſtiffly and pertinaciouſly deny.

The truth of the matter is this; there is nothing of injuſtice or cruelty in either caſe; neither in an innocent perſon's ſuffering for the benefit of an offender, nor in his ſtead; ſuppoſing the ſuffering to be voluntary: but they have equally the ſame appearance

pearance of injustice and cruelty: nor can I possibly discern any reason why injustice and cruelty should be objected in the one case more than in the other; there being every whit as little reason why an innocent person should suffer for the benefit of a criminal, as why he should suffer in his stead. So that I hope this objection, which above all the rest hath been so loudly and so invidiously urged, hath received a just answer. SERM. XLVII.

And I believe, if the matter were searched to the bottom, all this perverse contention, about our SAVIOUR's suffering for our benefit but not in our stead, will signify just nothing. For if CHRIST died for our benefit so as some way or other, by virtue of his death and sufferings, to save us from the wrath of GOD and to procure our escape from eternal death, this, for ought I know, is all that any body means by his dying in our stead. For he that dies with an intention to do that benefit to another as to save him from death, doth certainly to all intents and purposes die in his place and stead.

And if they will grant this to be their meaning, the controversy is at an end; and both sides are agreed in the thing, and do only differ in the phrase and manner of expression: which is to seek a quarrel and an occasion of difference where there is no real ground for it; a thing which ought to be very far from reasonable and peaceable minds.

For the Socinians say, that our SAVIOUR's voluntary obedience and sufferings did procure his exaltation at the right-hand of GOD, and power and authority to forgive sins, and to give eternal life to as many as he pleased: so that they grant that his obedience and sufferings, in the meritorious consequence

SERM. XLVII.

of them, do redound to our benefit and advantage as much as we pretend and ſay they do; only they are loth in expreſs terms to acknowledge that CHRIST died in our ſtead: and this, for no other reaſon that I can imagine, but becauſe they have denied it ſo often and ſo long.

But I appeal to the ingenuity of our adverſaries, whether this do not in the laſt iſſue come all to one; and be not, on their part, a mere controverſy about words: for ſuppoſe a malefactor condemned to ſome grievous puniſhment, and the king's ſon to ſave him from it is contented to ſubmit to great diſgrace and ſufferings: in reward of which ſufferings the king takes his ſon into his throne and ſets him at his own right-hand, and gives him power to pardon this malefactor, and upon a fitting ſubmiſſion and repentance to advance him to honour: will not any man in this caſe allow that the king's ſon ſuffered inſtead of this malefactor, and ſmile at any man that ſhall be ſo nice as to grant, that indeed he ſuffered for him, but yet to deny, that he was puniſhed for him; to allow that he bore the inconvenience of his faults, but yet obſtinately to ſtand it out, that the faults of this malefactor were not laid upon him, or in any wiſe ſo imputed to him that he can be ſaid to have ſuffered in his ſtead? This is juſt the caſe, and the difference in reality and in the laſt reſult of things is nothing but words.

Thus far have I tried your patience in a contentious argument; in which I take no pleaſure, but yet ſhall be glad if I may be ſo happy as by any thing that hath been ſaid to contribute towards the putting an end to ſo unhappy a controverſy, which

hath troubled the world ſo long, and raiſed ſuch a duſt that very few have been able to ſee clearly through it. SERM. XLVII.

However I cannot diſmiſs this argument without making ſome uſeful but very ſhort reflections upon this great doctrine of our religion, namely, that the Son of GOD being made a ſacrifice for us, and expoſed to ſuch bitter ſufferings and ſo cruel a death for the expiation of our ſins, ſhould create in us the greateſt dread and deteſtation of ſin, and for ever deter us from all wilful tranſgreſſion and diſobedience. For if the guilt of our ſins was done away upon ſuch hard terms, and coſt the dearly beloved Son of GOD ſo much ſweat and blood, then ſurely we ought to take great heed how by our renewed provocations we renew his paſſion, and do what in us lies to "crucify to our ſelves the Son of GOD "afreſh, and to put him to an open ſhame."

If GOD did ſo terribly afflict the dearly beloved of his ſoul for our ſakes; if the Son of GOD was ſo grievouſly "wounded for our trangreſſions" and ſo ſorely "bruiſed for our iniquities:" if ſo fearful a ſtorm of vengeance fell upon the moſt innocent perſon that ever was for our ſins, then we have reaſon to take that kind and merciful admonition of the Son of GOD to ſinners, to "ſin no more, leſt a "worſe thing," if it be poſſible, "come upon" our ſelves.

In this diſpenſation of GOD's grace and mercy to mankind, by the death of his Son, GOD ſeems to have gone to the very extremity of things, and almoſt further than goodneſs and juſtice will well admit; to afflict innocency it ſelf to ſave the guilty:

SERM. XLVII.

and if herein God hath expreſſed his hatred of ſin in ſuch a wonderful way of love and kindneſs to the ſons of men as looks almoſt like hatred of innocency and his own Son: this ought in all ingenuity and gratitude to our gracious Redeemer, who "was "made a curſe for us, and "loved us" to that degree as to "waſh us from our ſins in his own "blood;" I ſay, this ought to beget in us a greater diſpleaſure againſt ſin, and a more perfect deteſtation of it, than if we had ſuffered the puniſhment due to it, in our own perſons: for in this caſe, we could only have been diſpleaſed at our ſelves, and our ſins as the juſt cauſe of our ſufferings; but in the other, we ought to hate ſin as the unhappy occaſion of the ſaddeſt misfortune and foreſt calamities to the beſt man that ever was, and to our beſt friend, for our ſins and four our ſakes.

Since then the Son of God hath ſo graciouſly condeſcended to be "made in all things" like unto us, "ſin only excepted;" let us aſpire as much as is poſſible, to become like to him: above all, let us hate and avoid ſin as the only thing in which the Son of God would have no part with us, though he was contented to ſuffer ſuch bitter things to ſave us from the defilement and dominion of it, from the puniſhment and all the diſmal conſequences of it.

He had no ſin," "but God was pleaſed to "lay "upon him the iniquities of us all," and "to "make his ſoul an offering for ſin," and to permit all that to be done to him which was due to us: he was contented to be ſacrificed once for all mankind, that men might for ever ceaſe from that inhuman and ineffectual way of ſacrificing one another, where-

by

by inſtead of expiating their guilt they did inflame it, and by thinking to make atonement for their ſins they did in truth add to the number and heinouſneſs of them. SERM. XLVII.

And let us likewiſe learn from this admirable pattern, to pity thoſe that are in miſery, as CHRIST alſo hath pitied us; and to "ſave them that are "ready to periſh," for his ſake who "came to ſeek "and to ſave us that were loſt."

Let us, upon all occaſions, be ready to open our bowels of compaſſion towards the poor; in a thankful imitation of his grace and goodneſs who for our ſakes choſe to be a beggar, that we for his ſake might not deſpiſe the poor, but might have a tender regard and compaſſion to thoſe whoſe condition in this world does ſo nearly reſemble that in which the Son of GOD thought it fitteſt for him to appear when he was pleaſed to become man.

In a word, let us in the whole courſe, and in all the actions of our lives, "ſhew forth the virtues of "him who hath called us out of darkneſs into his "marvellous light;" and "hath raiſed up a mighty ſalvation for us," that "being delivered from "all our ſpiritual enemies," from ſin and all the the powers of darkneſs, we might "ſerve him" who hath "ſaved us; walking in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him, all the days of our lives."

Now, "to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and "to the Lamb that was ſlain: to GOD even our Father, and to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the firſt "begotten from the dead, and the prince of the "kings of the earth: unto him, who hath loved us, "and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood;"

and

and whilſt we were enemies to him, loved us at ſuch a rate as never any man did his friend. To him, who became man, that he might bring us to GOD; and aſſumed our frail and mortal nature, that he might clothe us with immortality and life: to him, who was pleaſed to dwell and live amongſt us, that he might teach us how to live: to him, "who died for our ſins, and roſe again for our juſti-"fication, and lives for ever to make interceſſion "for us:" to him be glory and dominion, thankſgiving and praiſe to eternal ages. Amen.

SERMON XLVIII.

Concerning the Unity of the Divine Nature, and the Bleſſed Trinity, &c.

---

1 TIM. ii. 5.

For there is one GOD.

SERM. XLVIII.

THE particle for leads us to the conſideration of the context and occaſion of theſe words, which in ſhort is this. The deſign of this epiſtle is to direct Timothy, to whom St. Paul had committed the government of the church of Epheſus, how he ought to demean himſelf in that great and weighty charge. And at the beginning of this chapter he gives direction concerning publick prayers in the church; that "prayers and thankſgiving "be made for all men," and for all ranks and orders

ders of men: especially for "kings and all that are "in authority, that under them Christians might "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and "honesty." SERM. XLVIII.

And this he tells us was very suitable to the Christian religion, by which GOD designed the salvation of mankind; and therefore it must needs be very acceptable to him that we should offer up prayers and thanksgivings to him in behalf of all men: "For this," saith the apostle, "is good and ac-"ceptable in the sight of GOD our SAVIOUR, who "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the "knowledge of the truth."

And then it follows in the next words, "For "there is one GOD, and one Mediator between GOD "and men, the man CHRIST JESUS, who gave "himself a ransom for all:" as if he had said, this universal charity of Christians, in "praying for all "men," must needs be very acceptable to him to whom we put up our prayers, GOD the Father, who sent his Son for the salvation of all men: and to him likewise by whom we offer up our prayers to GOD, and is amongst us Christians the only "Mediator be-"tween GOD and men," in virtue of that price and ransom which he paid for the redemption of all mankind; I say, for this reason it must needs be very acceptable to him that we should pray for all men, because he died for all men, and now that he is in heaven at the right hand of GOD intercedes with him for the salvation of those for whom he died: "there is one GOD, and one Mediator between "GOD and men, the man CHRIST JESUS, whogave "himself a ransom for all."

Which

SERM. XLVIII.

Which words, though they be brought in to prove more immediately that it is "acceptable to "God our SAVIOUR," that we ſhould put up prayers to him for all men, becauſe he deſires the ſalvation of all men, and hath ſent his Son to purchaſe the ſalvation of all men, by the ſacrifice of himſelf; and in virtue of that ſacrifice to be the only Mediator between GOD and us: I ſay, though this be the immediate ſcope and deſign of theſe words, yet they are likewiſe a direction to us, unto whom we ought to addreſs our prayers, namely, to GOD; and by whoſe mediation and interceſſion we ought to put up our prayers to GOD the Father, namely, by his Son JESUS CHRIST, who is conſtituted the only "Mediator between GOD and men."

There are ſeveral other propoſitions contained in this and the following verſe; but I ſhall at preſent confine myſelf to the firſt, namely, that there is one GOD, that is, but one, as St. Paul elſewhere expreſſeth it, "There is none other GOD but one." And Moſes lays this as the foundation of the natural law, as well as of the Jewiſh religion, "The "LORD he is one GOD, and there is none beſides "him," that is, beſides Jehovah, whom the people of Iſrael did worſhip as the only true GOD. And this the prophet Iſaiah perpetually declares in oppoſition to the polytheiſm and variety of gods among the heathen. "I am the firſt, and I am the "laſt, and beſides me there is no god." And again, "Is there any god beſides me? There is no "god, I know not any:" he, who hath an infinite knowledge and knows all things, knows no other god. And our bleſſed SAVIOUR makes this the fundamental

1 Cor. viii. 4.

Deut. iv. 35.

Iſai. xliv. 6.

Ver. 8.

fundamental article of all religion, and the knowledge of it neceſſary to every man's ſalvation; "this," ſays he, "is life eternal, to know thee "the only true GOD."

The unity of the divine nature is a notion, wherein the greateſt and the wiſeſt part of mankind did always agree, and therefore may reaſonably be preſumed to be either natural, or to have ſprung from ſome original tradition delivered down to us from the firſt parents of mankind: I mean, that there is one ſupreme being, the author and cauſe of all things, whom the moſt ancient of the heathen poets commonly called the father of gods and men. And thus Ariſtotle in his metaphyſicks defines GOD, the eternal and moſt excellent, or beſt of all living beings. And this notion of one ſupreme being, agrees very well with that exact harmony which appears in the frame and government of the world, in which we ſee all things conſpiring to one end, and continuing in one uniform order and courſe; which cannot reaſonably be aſcribed to any other but a conſtant and uniform cauſe; and which to a conſidering man does plainly ſhew that all things are made and governed by that one powerful principle, and great and wiſe mind which we call GOD.

But although the generality of mankind had a notion of one ſupreme GOD, yet the idolatry of the heathen plainly ſhews, that this notion in proceſs of time was greatly degenerated, and corrupted into an apprehenſion of a plurality of gods; though in reaſon it is evident enough, that there can be no more gods than one; and that one, who is of infinite perfection, is as ſufficient to all purpoſes whatſoever,

SERM. XLVIII.

ſoever, as ten thouſand deities, if they were poſſible, could poſſibly be; as I ſhall ſhew in the following diſcourſe.

Now this multitude of deities, which the fond ſuperſtition and vain imagination of men had formed to themſelves, were by the wiſer ſort, who being forced to comply with the follies of the people endeavoured to make the beſt of them, ſuppoſed to be either parts of the univerſe, which the Egyptians, as Plutarch tells us, thought to be the ſame with GOD; but then the more conſiderable parts of the univerſe they parcelled out into ſeveral deities: and as the ocean hath ſeveral names, according to the ſeveral coaſts and countries by which it paſſeth; ſo they gave ſeveral names to this one deity, according to the ſeveral parts of the world which ſeveral nations made the objects of their worſhip.

Or elſe, they adored the ſeveral perfections and powers of the one ſupreme GOD, under ſeveral names and titles, with regard to the various bleſſings and benefits which they thought they received from him.

Thus the Indian philoſophers, the brachmans, are ſaid to have worſhipped the ſun as the ſupreme deity; and he certainly is the moſt worſhipful of all ſenſible beings, and bids faireſt for a deity; eſpecially if he was, as they ſuppoſed, animated by a ſpirit endued with knowledge and underſtanding. And if a man, who had been bred in a dark cave, ſhould all on the ſudden be brought out at noonday to behold this viſible world; after he had viewed and conſidered it a while, he would in all probability pitch upon the ſun as the moſt likely, of all the things he had ſeen, to be a deity. For if ſuch a

man had any notion of a god, and were to chuſe one upon ſight, he would without diſpute fix upon the ſun, and fall down before him and worſhip him.

And Macrobius manageth this as his main plea for the idolatry of the heathen, that under all the ſeveral names of their gods they worſhipped the ſun: and this diverſity of names was but a more diſtinct conception and acknowledgment of the many bleſſings and advantages which mankind received from him, and a more particular and expreſs adoration of the ſeveral powers and perfections which were in him. And this was the very beſt defence, and all the tolerable ſenſe which the wiſeſt among the heathen could make of the multitude of their deities.

And yet whilſt they generally owned one ſupreme being that was the principle and original of all things, they worſhipped ſeveral ſubordinate deities as really diſtinct from one another. Some of theſe they fancied to be ſuperior to the reſt, and to have their reſidence in heaven; by which Marſilius Ficinus ſuppoſes Plato to mean no more but the chief of the angels. Theſe were called θεοὶ, *dii ſuperi* and *dii cœleſtes*, ſuperior and heavenly gods: the ſcripture terms them the hoſt of heaven, meaning the ſun, moon and ſtars, which they ſuppoſed to be animated, or at leaſt to be inhabited by angels or glorious ſpirits, whom they called gods.

Other of their deities were accounted much inferior to theſe, being ſuppoſed to be the ſouls of their deceaſed heroes; who for their great and worthy deeds, when they lived upon earth, were ſuppoſed after death to be tranſlated into the number of their

SERM. XLVIII.

gods. And these were called *semidei* and *deastri*, that is, half gods and a sort of gods: and as the other were celestial, so these were δαίμονες ἐπιχθόνιοι, a kind of terrestrial spirits, that were presidents and procurators of human affairs here below, that is, a middle sort of divine powers that were mediators and agents between GOD and men, and did carry the prayers and supplications of men to GOD, and bring down the commands and blessings of GOD to men.

But in the midst of all this crowd and confusion of deities, and the various superstitions about them, the wiser heathen, as Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Tully, Plutarch and others, preserved a true notion of one supreme GOD, whom they defined an infinite spirit, pure from all matter and free from all imperfection: and all the variety of their worship was, as they pretended in excuse of it, but a more particular owning of the various representations of the divine power and excellencies which manifested themselves in the world, and of the several communications of blessings and favours by them imparted to men: and * Tertullian observes, that even when idolatry had very much obscured the glory of the sovereign deity, yet the greater part of mankind did still in their common forms of speech, appropriate the name of GOD in a more especial and peculiar manner to one, saying, "if GOD grant, if GOD please," and the like.

So that there is sufficient ground to believe that the unity of the divine nature, or the notion of one supreme GOD, creator and governor of the world, was the primitive and general belief of mankind:

* Adversus Marcionem, l. 1. c. 10.

and

and that polytheiſm and idolatry were a corruption and degeneracy from the original notion which mankind had concerning GOD; as the ſcripture hiſtory doth declare and teſtify. SERM. XLVIII.

And this account, which I have given of the heathen idolatry, doth by no means excuſe it. For whatever may be ſaid by way of extenuation in behalf of ſome few of the wiſer and more devout among them, the generality were groſsly guilty both of believing more gods, and of worſhipping falſe gods.

And this muſt needs be a very great crime, ſince the ſcripture every where declares GOD to be particularly jealous in this caſe, and that "he will not "give his glory to another, nor his praiſe to graven "images." Nay, we may not ſo much as make uſe of ſenſible images to put us in mind of GOD, leſt devout ignorance, ſeeing the worſhip which wiſe men paid towards an idol, ſhould be drawn to terminate their worſhip there, as being the very deity it ſelf; which was certainly the caſe of the greateſt part of the heathen world.

And ſurely thoſe Chriſtians are in no leſs danger of idolatry, who pay a veneration to images by kneeling down and praying before them; and in this they are much more inexcuſable, becauſe they offend againſt a much clearer light; and yet when they go about to juſtify this practice, are able to bring no other nor better pleas for themſelves than the heathen did for their worſhipping of images, and for praying to their inferior deities, whom they looked upon as mediators between the gods in heaven and men upon earth.

There

SERM. XLVIII.

There is but one objection, that I know of, againſt the general conſent of mankind concerning the unity of GOD; and it is this, that there was an ancient doctrine of ſome of the moſt ancient nations, that there were two firſt cauſes or principles of all things; the one the cauſe of all good, and the other of all the evil that is in the world: the reaſon whereof ſeems to have been, that they could not apprehend how things of ſo contrary a nature, as good and evil, could proceed from one and the ſame cauſe.

And theſe two principles in ſeveral nations were called by ſeveral names. Plutarch ſays that among the Greeks the good principle was called GOD, and the evil principle δαίμων or the devil. In conformity to which ancient tradition the Manichees, a ſect which called themſelves Chriſtians, did advance two principles, the one infinitely good, which they ſuppoſed to be the original cauſe of all the good which is in the world; the other infinitely evil, to which they aſcribed all the evils that are in the world.

But all this is very plainly a corruption of a much more ancient tradition concerning that old ſerpent the devil, the head of the fallen angels, who by tempting our firſt parents to tranſgreſs a poſitive and expreſs law of GOD, brought ſin firſt into the world and all the evils conſequent upon it; of which the ſcripture gives us a moſt expreſs and particular account.

And as to the notion of a being infinitely evil, into which this tradition was corrupted, after idolatry had prevailed in the world, beſides that it is a con-

contradiction, it would likewise be to no purpose to assert two opposite principles of infinite, that is of equal force and power, for two infinites must of necessity be equal to one another; because nothing can be more or greater than infinite, and therefore if two infinite beings were possible they would certainly be equal, and could not be otherwise.

Now that the notion of a principle infinitely evil is a contradiction will be very plain, if we consider that what is infinitely evil must in strict reasoning, and by necessary consequence, be infinitely imperfect, and therefore infinitely weak; and for that reason, though never so malicious and mischievous, yet being infinitely weak and foolish, could never be in capacity either to contrive mischief or to execute it.

But if it should be admitted that a being infinitely mischievous could be infinitely knowing and powerful, yet it could effect no evil; because the opposite principle of infinite goodness, being also infinitely wise and powerful, they would tie up one another's hands. So that upon this supposition the notion of a deity must signify just nothing, because by virtue of the eternal opposition and equal conflict of these two principles they would keep one another at a perpetual bay; and being just an equal match to one another, the one having as much mind and power to do good as the other to do evil, instead of being two deities they would be but two idols, able to do neither good nor evil.

And having, I hope, now sufficiently cleared this objection, I shall proceed to shew how agreeable this principle, that "there is but one GOD," is to the common reason of mankind, and to the cleareſt

and

SERM. XLVIII.

and moſt eſſential notions which we have of GOD: and this will appear theſe two ways.

Firſt, by conſidering the moſt eſſential perfections of the divine nature.

Secondly, from the repugnancy and impoſſibility, the great abſurdity and inconvenience of ſuppoſing more gods than one.

Firſt, by conſidering the moſt eſſential perfections of the divine nature. Abſolute perfection which we aſcribe to GOD, as the moſt eſſential notion which mankind hath always had concerning him, does neceſſarily ſuppoſe unity; becauſe this is eſſential to the notion of a being that is abſolutely perfect, that all perfection meets and is united in ſuch a being: but to imagine more gods, and ſome perfections to be in one and ſome in another, does deſtroy the moſt eſſential notion which men have of GOD, namely, that he is a being abſolutely perfect, that is, as perfect as is poſſible: now to ſuppoſe ſome perfections in one GOD which are not in another, is to ſuppoſe ſome poſſible perfection to be wanting in GOD, which is a contradiction to the moſt natural and the moſt eaſy notion which all men have of GOD, that he is a being in whom all perfections do meet and are united: but if we ſuppoſe more gods, each of which hath all perfections united in him, then all but one would be ſuperfluous and needleſs; and therefore by juſt and neceſſary conſequence not only may, but of neceſſity muſt be ſuppoſed not to be; ſince neceſſary exiſtence is eſſential to the deity; and therefore if but one GOD be neceſſary, there can be no more.

Secondly,

Secondly, from the repugnancy and impoſſibility, the great abſurdity and inconvenience of the contrary. For ſuppoſe there were more gods, two for example; and if there may be two, there may be a million, for we can ſtop no where: I ſay, ſuppoſe two gods; either theſe two would be in all perfections equal and alike, or unequal and unlike: if equal and alike in all things, then, as I ſaid before, one of them would be needleſs and ſuperfluous, and if one, why not as well the other? They being ſuppoſed to be in all things perfectly alike; and then there would be no neceſſity at all of the being of a GOD; and yet it is granted on all hands, that neceſſary exiſtence is eſſential to the notion of a GOD: But if they be unequal, that is, one of them inferior to and leſs perfect than the other, that which is inferior and leſs perfect could not be GOD, becauſe he would not have all perfection. So that which way ſoever we turn the thing and look upon it, the notion of more gods than one is by it's own repugnancy and ſelf-contradiction deſtructive of it ſelf. SERM. XLVIII.

Before I come to apply this doctrine of the unity of GOD, I muſt not paſs by a very conſiderable difficulty, which will moſt certainly ariſe in every man's mind, without taking particular notice of it, and endeavouring to remove it, if I can. And it is the doctrine of the bleſſed Trinity, or of three real differences or diſtinct perſons in one and the ſame divine nature.

And though this be not a difficulty peculiar only to the Chriſtian religion, as by the generality of thoſe who urge this objection againſt Chriſtians hath

SERM. XLVIII.

been inconsiderately thought; for it is certain, that long before Christianity appeared in the world, there was a very ancient tradition, both among Jews and heathen, concerning three real differences or distinctions in the divine nature, very nearly resembling the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, as I shall have occasion more fully to shew by and by: yet it cannot be denied, but that this difficulty doth in a more especial manner affect the Christian religion; the generality of Christians, who do most firmly believe the Trinity, believing likewise at the same time, more stedfastly if it be possible, that there is but one GOD. "To us," saith St. Paul, that is, to us Christians, "there is but one GOD." But how can this possibly consist with the common doctrine of Christians concerning the Trinity, GOD the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to each of whom they attribute, as they verily believe the scripture does, the most incommunicable properties and perfections of the divine nature? And what is this less in effect than to say, that there are three gods?

1 Cor. viii. 6.

For the clearing of this difficulty I shall, with all the brevity I can, offer these following considerations; which I hope, to an impartial and unprejudiced judgment, will be sufficient to remove it, or at least to break the main force and strength of it.

1. I. I desire it may be well considered, that there is a wide difference between the nice speculations of the schools, beyond what is revealed in scripture, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and what the scripture only teaches and asserts concerning this mystery. For it is not to be denied, but that the school-

men,

men, who abounded in wit and leiſure, though very few among them had either exact ſkill in the holy ſcriptures, or in eccleſiaſtical antiquity and the writings of the ancient fathers of the Chriſtian church: I ſay, it cannot be denied but that theſe ſpeculative and very acute men, who wrought a great part of their divinity out of their own brains, as ſpiders do cobwebs out of their own bowels, have ſtarted a thouſand ſubtleties about this myſtery, ſuch as no Chriſtian is bound to trouble his head withal; much leſs is it neceſſary for him to underſtand thoſe niceties, which we may reaſonably preſume that they who talk of them did themſelves never thoroughly underſtand; and leaſt of all is it neceſſary to believe them. The modeſty of Chriſtians is contented in divine myſteries to know what GOD hath thought fit to reveal concerning them, and hath no curioſity to be "wiſe above that which is written." It is enough to believe what GOD ſays concerning theſe matters; and if any man will venture to ſay more, every other man ſurely is at his liberty to believe as he ſees reaſon. SERM. XLVIII.

II. I deſire it may in the next place be conſidered, that the doctrine of the Trinity, even as it is aſſerted in ſcripture, is acknowledged by us to be ſtill a great myſtery, and ſo imperfectly revealed as to be in a great meaſure incomprehenſible by human reaſon. And therefore though ſome learned and judicious men may have very commendably attempted a more particular explication of this great myſtery by the ſtrength of reaſon, yet I dare not pretend to that, knowing both the difficulty and danger of II.

SERM. XLVIII.

such an attempt, and mine own insufficiency for it. All that I ever designed upon this argument, was to make out the credibility of the thing from the authority of the holy scriptures, without descending to a more particular explication of it than the scripture hath given us; lest by endeavouring to lay the difficulties which are already started about it new ones should be raised, and such as may perhaps be much harder to be removed than those which we have now to grapple withal. And this I hope I have in some measure done in one of the former discourses. Nor indeed do I see that it is any ways necessary to do more; it being sufficient that GOD hath declared what he thought fit in this matter, and that we do firmly believe what he says concerning it to be true, though we do not perfectly comprehend the meaning of all that he hath said about it.

Serm. XLIV.

For in this and the like cases, I take an implicit faith to be very commendable, that is, to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured GOD hath revealed, though we do not fully understand his meaning in such a revelation. And thus every man, who believes the holy scriptures to be a truly divine revelation, does implicitly believe a great part of the prophetical books of scripture and several obscure expressions in those books, though he do not particularly understand the meaning of all the predictions and expressions contained in them. In like manner, there are certainly a great many very good Christians, who do not believe and comprehend the mysteries of faith nicely enough to approve themselves to a scholastical and magisterial judge of controversies, who yet

yet if they do heartily embrace the doctrines which are clearly revealed in scripture, and live up to the plain precepts of the Christian religion, will I doubt not be very well approved by the great and just, and by the infallibly infallible judge of the world. SERM. XLVIII.

III. Let it be farther considered, that though neither the word trinity, nor perhaps person, in the sense in which it is used by divines when they treat of this mystery, be any where to be met with in scripture; yet it cannot be denied but that three are there spoken of by the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in whose name every Christian is baptized, and to each of whom the highest titles and properties of GOD are in scripture attributed: and these three are spoken of with as much distinction from one another, as we use to speak of three several persons. III.

So that though the word trinity be not found in scripture, yet these three are there expressly and frequently mentioned; and a trinity is nothing but three of any thing. And so likewise though the word person be not there expressly applied to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; yet it will be very hard to find a more convenient word whereby to express the distinction of these three. For which reason I could never yet see any just cause to quarrel at this term. For since the holy Spirit of GOD in scripture hath thought fit in speaking of these three to distinguish them from one another, as we use in common speech to distinguish three several persons, I cannot see any reason why, in the explication of this mystery which purely depends upon divine revelation,

SERM. XLVIII.

we ſhould not ſpeak of it in the ſame manner as the ſcripture doth: and though the word perſon is now become a term of art, I ſee no cauſe why we ſhould decline it, ſo long as we mean by it neither more nor leſs than what the ſcripture ſays in other words.

IV. IV. It deſerves farther to be conſidered, that there hath been a very ancient tradition concerning three real differences or diſtinctions in the divine nature; and theſe, as I ſaid before, very nearly reſembling the Chriſtian doctrine of the Trinity.

Whence this tradition had it's original is not eaſy upon good and certain grounds to ſay; but certain it is, that the Jews anciently had this notion: and that they did diſtinguiſh the Word of GOD, and the holy Spirit of GOD, from him who was abſolutely called GOD, and whom they looked upon as the firſt principle of all things; as is plain from Philo Judæus, and Moſes Nachmanides, and others cited by the learned Grotius in his incomparable book of the truth of the Chriſtian religion.

Book V.

And among the heathen, Plato, who probably enough might have this notion from the Jews, did make three diſtinctions in the deity by the names of eſſential goodneſs, and mind, and ſpirit.

So that whatever objections this matter may be liable to, it is not ſo peculiar a doctrine of the Chriſtian religion as many have imagined, though it is revealed by it with much more clearneſs and certainty: and conſequently, neither the Jews nor Plato have any reaſon to object it to us Chriſtians; eſpecially ſince they pretend no other ground for it but

but either their own reaſon, or an ancient tradition from their fathers: whereas we Chriſtians do appeal to expreſs divine revelation for what we believe in this matter, and do believe it ſingly upon that account. SERM. XLVIII.

V. It is beſides very conſiderable, that the ſcriptures do deliver this doctrine of the Trinity, without any manner of doubt or queſtion concerning the unity of the divine nature: and not only ſo, but do moſt ſtedfaſtly and conſtantly aſſert, that there is but one GOD: and in thoſe very texts, in which theſe three differences are mentioned, the unity of the divine nature is expreſly aſſerted; as where St. John makes mention of the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, the unity of theſe three is likewiſe affirmed, "There are three that bear record in heaven, "the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and theſe "three are one." V.

VI. It is yet farther conſiderable, that from this myſtery, as delivered in ſcripture, a plurality of gods cannot be inferred without making the ſcripture groſly to contradict itſelf; which I charitably ſuppoſe the Socinians would be as loth to admit as we ourſelves are. And if either councils, or fathers, or ſchoolmen, have ſo explained this myſtery as to give any juſt ground, or ſo much as a plauſible colour for ſuch an inference, let the blame fall where it is due, and let it not be charged on the holy ſcriptures; but rather, as the apoſtle ſays in another caſe, "Let GOD be true, and every man a liar." VI.

VIIthly,

SERM. XLVIII. VII. VIIthly and laſtly, I deſire it may be conſidered, that it is not repugnant to reaſon, to believe ſome things which are incomprehenſible by our reaſon; provided that we have ſufficient ground and reaſon for the belief of them: eſpecially if they be concerning GOD, who is in his nature incomprehenſible; and we be well aſſured that he hath revealed them. And therefore it ought not to offend us that theſe differences in the deity are incomprehenſible by our finite underſtandings; becauſe the divine nature itſelf is ſo, and yet the belief of that is the foundation of all religion.

There are a great many things in nature which we cannot comprehend how they either are, or can be: as the continuity of matter, that is, how the parts of it do hang ſo faſt together that they are many times very hard to be parted; and yet we are ſure that it is ſo, becauſe we ſee it every day. So likewiſe, how the ſmall ſeeds of things contain the whole form and nature of the things from which they proceed, and into which by degrees they grow; and yet we plainly ſee this every year.

There are many things likewiſe in our ſelves, which no man is able in any meaſure to comprehend, as to the manner how they are done and performed: as the vital union of ſoul and body: who can imagine by what device or means a ſpirit comes to be ſo cloſely united and ſo firmly linked to a material body, that they are not to be parted without great force and violence offered to nature? The like may be ſaid of the operations of our ſeveral faculties of ſenſe and imagination, of memory and reaſon, and eſpecially of the liberty of our wills: and yet we certainly

SERM. XLVIII.

certainly find all these faculties in ourselves, though we cannot either comprehend or explain the particular manner in which the several operations of them are performed.

And if we cannot comprehend the manner of those operations, which we plainly perceive and feel to be in ourselves, much less can we expect to comprehend things without us; and least of all can we pretend to comprehend the infinite nature and perfections of GOD, and every thing belonging to him. For GOD himself is certainly the greatest mystery of all other, and acknowledged by mankind to be in his nature, and in the particular manner of his existence, incomprehensible by human understanding. And the reason of this is very evident, because GOD is infinite, and our knowledge and understanding is but finite: and yet no sober man ever thought this a good reason to call the being of GOD in question.

The same may be said of GOD's certain knowledge of future contingencies, which depend upon the uncertain wills of free agents: it being utterly inconceivable how any understanding, how large and perfect soever, can certainly know beforehand that which depends upon the free will of another, which is an arbitrary and uncertain cause.

And yet the scripture doth not only attribute this foreknowledge to GOD, but gives us also plain instances of GOD's foretelling such things, many ages before they happened, as could not come to pass but by the sins of men, in which we are sure that GOD can have no hand; though nothing can happen without his permission: such was that most

7.

SERM. XLVIII.

memorable event of CHRIST, who, as the ſcripture tells us, was "by wicked hands crucified and ſlain;" and yet even this is ſaid to have happened "accord-"ing to the determinate foreknowledge of GOD," and was punctually foretold by him ſome hundreds of years before. Nay, the ſcripture doth not only aſcribe this power and perfection to the divine knowledge, but natural reaſon hath been forced to acknowledge it, as we may ſee in ſome of the wiſeſt of the philoſophers. And yet it would puzzle the greateſt philoſopher that ever was, to give any tolerable account how any knowledge whatſoever can certainly and infallibly foreſee an event through uncertain and contingent cauſes. All the reaſonable ſatisfaction that can be had in this matter is this, that it is not at all unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that infinite knowledge may have ways of knowing things, which our finite underſtandings can by no means comprehend how they can poſſibly be known.

Again, there is hardly any thing more inconceivable than how a thing ſhould be of itſelf, and without any cauſe of it's being; and yet our reaſon compels us to acknowledge this: becauſe we certainly ſee that ſomething is, which muſt either have been of itſelf and without a cauſe, or elſe ſomething that we do not ſee muſt have been of itſelf and have made all other things: and by this reaſoning we are forced to acknowledge a deity, the mind of man being able to find no reſt but in the acknowledgment of one eternal and wiſe mind, as the principle and firſt cauſe of all other things; and this principle is that which mankind do by general conſent call GOD. So that GOD hath laid a ſure foundation of our acknowledgment

ledgment of his being in the reaſon of our own minds: and though it be one of the hardeſt things in the world to conceive how any thing can be of itſelf, yet neceſſity drives us to acknowledge it whether we will or no, and this being once granted, our reaſon, being tired in trying all other ways, will, for it's own quiet and eaſe, force us at laſt to fall in with the general apprehenſion and belief of mankind concerning a deity.

To give but one inſtance more; there is the like difficulty in conceiving how any thing can be made out of nothing; and yet our reaſon doth oblige us to believe it: becauſe matter, which is a very imperfect being and merely paſſive, muſt either always have been of itſelf; or elſe, by the infinite power of a moſt perfect and active being, muſt have been made out of nothing: which is much more credible, than that any thing ſo imperfect as matter is ſhould be of itſelf: becauſe that which is of itſelf cannot be conceived to have any bounds and limits of it's being and perfection; for by the ſame reaſon that it neceſſarily is and of itſelf, it muſt neceſſarily have all perfection, which it is certain matter hath not; and yet neceſſary exiſtence is ſo great a perfection, that we cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe any thing that hath this perfection to want any other.

Thus you ſee by theſe inſtances, that it is not repugnant to reaſon to believe a great many things to be, of the manner of whoſe exiſtence we are not able to give a particular and diſtinct account. And much leſs is it repugnant to reaſon to believe thoſe things concerning GOD, which we are very well aſſured he hath declared concerning himſelf, though theſe

things by our reaſon ſhould be incomprehenſible.

And this is truly the caſe as to the matter now under debate: we are ſufficiently aſſured that the ſcriptures are a divine revelation, and that this myſtery of the Trinity is therein declared to us. Now that we cannot comprehend it, is no ſufficient reaſon not to believe it: for if this were a good reaſon for not believing it, then no man ought to believe that there is a GOD, becauſe his nature is moſt certainly incomprehenſible. But we are aſſured by many arguments that there is a GOD; and the ſame natural reaſon which aſſures us that he is, doth likewiſe aſſure us that he is incomprehenſible; and therefore our believing him to be ſo doth by no means overthrow our belief of his being.

In like manner, we are aſſured by divine revelation of the truth of this doctrine of the Trinity; and being once aſſured of that, our not being able fully to comprehend it, is not reaſon enough to ſtagger our belief of it. A man cannot deny what he ſees, though the neceſſary conſequence of admitting it may be ſomething which he cannot comprehend. One cannot deny the frame of this world which he ſees with his eyes, though from thence it will neceſſarily follow, that either that or ſomething elſe muſt be of itſelf; which yet, as I ſaid before, is a thing which no man can comprehend how it can be.

And by the ſame reaſon a man muſt not deny what GOD ſays, to be true; though he cannot comprehend many things which GOD ſays: as particularly concerning this myſtery of the Trinity. It ought then to ſatisfy us that there is ſufficient evi-

dence

dence that this doctrine is delivered in scripture, and that what is there declared concerning it doth not imply a contradiction. For why should our finite understandings pretend to comprehend that which is infinite, or to know all the real differences that are consistent with the unity of an infinite being; or to be able fully to explain this mystery by any similitude or resemblance taken from finite beings?

But before I leave this argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing which they of the church of Rome are perpetually objecting to us upon this occasion. And it is this, that by the same reason that we believe the doctrine of the Trinity, we may and must receive that of transubstantiation. God forbid: because of all the doctrines that ever were in any religion, this of transubstantiation is certainly the most abominably absurd.

However, this objection plainly shews how fondly and obstinately they are addicted to their own errors, how mishapen and monstrous soever, insomuch that rather than the dictates of their church, how absurd soever, should be called in question, they will question the truth even of Christianity it self; and if we will not take in transubstantiation, and admit it to be a necessary article of the Christian faith, they grow so sullen and desperate that they matter not what becomes of all the rest: and rather than not have their will of us in that which is controverted, they will give up that which by their own confession is an undoubted article of the Christian faith, and not controverted on either side; except only by the Socinians, who yet are hearty enemies to transubstantiation, and have exposed the absurdity of it with great advantage. But

SERM. XLVIII.

But I ſhall endeavour to return a more particular anſwer to this objection; and ſuch a one as I hope will ſatisfy every conſiderate and unprejudiced mind, that after all this confidence and ſwaggering of theirs there is by no means equal reaſon either for the receiving or for the rejecting of theſe two doctrines of the Trinity and tranſubſtantiation.

Firſt, there is not equal reaſon for the belief of theſe two doctrines. This objection, if it be of any force, muſt ſuppoſe that there is equal evidence and proof from ſcripture for theſe two doctrines: but this we utterly deny, and with great reaſon; becauſe it is no more evident from the words of ſcripture that the ſacramental bread is ſubſtantially changed into CHRIST's natural body by virtue of thoſe words, "this is my body," than it is that CHRIST is ſubſtantially changed into a natural vine by virtue of thoſe words, "I am the true vine;" or than that the rock in the wilderneſs, of which the Iſraelites drank, was ſubſtantially changed into the perſon of CHRIST, becauſe it is expreſly ſaid, "that rock "was CHRIST;" or than that the Chriſtian church is ſubſtantially changed into the natural body of CHRIST, becauſe it is in expreſs terms ſaid of the church, that "it is his body."

John xv. 1.

Eph. i. 23.

But beſides this, ſeveral of their own moſt learned writers have freely acknowledged, that tranſubſtantiation can neither be directly proved, nor neceſſarily concluded from ſcripture: but this the writers of the Chriſtian church did never acknowledge concerning the Trinity, and the divinity of CHRIST; but have always appealed to the clear and undeniable teſtimonies of ſcripture for the proof of theſe doctrines.

And then the whole force of the objection amounts to this, that if I am bound to believe what I am ſure GOD ſays, though I cannot comprehend it; then I am bound by the ſame reaſon to believe the greateſt abſurdity in the world, though I have no manner of aſſurance of any divine revelation concerning it. And if this be their meaning, though we underſtand not tranſubſtantiation, yet we very well underſtand what they would have, but cannot grant it; becauſe there is not equal reaſon to believe two things, for one of which there is good proof, and for the other no proof at all.

Secondly, neither is there equal reaſon for the rejecting of theſe two doctrines. This the objection ſuppoſes, which yet cannot be ſuppoſed but upon one or both of theſe two grounds: either becauſe theſe two doctrines are equally incomprehenſible, or becauſe they are equally loaded with abſurdities and contradictions.

The firſt is no good ground of rejecting any doctrine, merely becauſe it is incomprehenſible; as I have abundantly ſhewed already. But beſides this, there is a wide difference between plain matters of ſenſe, and myſteries concerning GOD; and it does by no means follow, that, if a man do once admit any thing concerning GOD which he cannot comprehend, he hath no reaſon afterwards to believe what he himſelf ſees. This is a moſt unreaſonable and deſtructive way of arguing, becauſe it ſtrikes at the foundation of all certainty, and ſets every man at liberty to deny the moſt plain and evident truths of Chriſtianity, if he may not be humoured in having the abſurdeſt things in the world admitted for

SERM. XLVIII.

for true. The next ſtep will be to perſuade us that we may as well deny the being of God, becauſe his nature is incomprehenſible by our reaſon, as deny tranſubſtantiation, becauſe it evidently contradicts our ſenſes.

2dly, Nor are theſe two doctrines loaded with the like abſurdities and contradictions: ſo far from this, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as it is delivered in the ſcriptures, and hath already been explained, hath no abſurdity or contradiction either involved in it, or neceſſarily conſequent upon it: but the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation is big with all imaginable abſurdity and contradiction. And their own ſchoolmen have ſufficiently expoſed it; eſpecially Scotus, and he deſigned to do ſo, as any man that attentively reads him may plainly diſcover: for in his diſputation about it he treats this doctrine with the greateſt contempt, as a new invention of the council of Lateran under pope Innocent III. To the decree of which council concerning it he ſeems to pay a formal ſubmiſſion, but really derides it as contrary to the common ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, and not at all ſupported by ſcripture; as any one may eaſily diſcern that will carefully conſider his manner of handling it, and the reſult of his whole diſputation about it.

And now ſuppoſe there were ſome appearance of abſurdity and contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity as it is delivered in ſcripture, muſt we therefore believe a doctrine which is not at all revealed in ſcripture, and which hath certainly in it all the abſurdities in the world, and all the contradictions to ſenſe and reaſon; and which once admitted, doth

at

at once deſtroy all certainty? Yes, ſay they, why not? Since we of the church of Rome are ſatisfied that this doctrine is revealed in ſcripture; or, if it be not, is defined by the church, which is every whit as good. But is this equal, to demand of us the belief of a thing which hath always been controverted, not only between us and them, but even among themſelves, at leaſt till the council of Trent? And this upon ſuch unreaſonable terms, that we muſt either yield this point to them, or elſe renounce a doctrine agreed on both ſides to be revealed in ſcripture.

To ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this proceeding, let us ſuppoſe a prieſt of the church of Rome preſſing a Jew or Turk to the belief of tranſubſtantiation; and becauſe one kindneſs deſerves another, the Jew or Turk ſhould demand of him the belief of all the fables in the talmud, or in the alcoran; ſince none of theſe, nor indeed all of them together, are near ſo abſurd as tranſubſtantiation: would not this be much more reaſonable and equal than what they demand of us? Since no abſurdity, how monſtrous and big ſoever, can be thought of, which may not enter into an underſtanding, in which a breach hath been already made wide enough to admit tranſubſtantiation. The prieſts of Baal did not half ſo much deſerve to be expoſed by the prophet for their ſuperſtition and folly, as the prieſts of the church of Rome do for this ſenſleſs and ſtupid doctrine of theirs with a hard name. I ſhall only add this one thing more, that if this doctrine were poſſible to be true, and clearly proved to be ſo; yet it would be evidently uſeleſs and to no purpoſe. For

SERM. XLVIII.

it pretends to change the ſubſtance of one thing into the ſubſtance of another thing, that is already and before this change is pretended to be made. But to what purpoſe? Not to make the body of CHRIST, for that was already in being; and the ſubſtance of the bread is loſt, nothing of it, remaineth but accidents which are good for nothing, and indeed are nothing when the ſubſtance is deſtroyed and gone.

All that now remains, is to make ſome practical inferences from this doctrine of the unity of the divine nature. And they ſhall be the ſame which GOD himſelf makes by Moſes, which text is alſo cited by our SAVIOUR, "Hear, O Iſrael, the LORD "thy GOD is one LORD; and thou ſhalt love the "LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all "thy ſoul, and with all thy mind, and with all "thy ſtrength: and thou ſhalt love thy neighbour "as thyſelf." So that according to our SAVIOUR, the whole duty of man, the love of GOD and of our neighbour, is founded in the unity of the divine nature.

Deut vi. 4. Mark xii. 29,30,31.

I. The love of GOD; "the LORD thy GOD is "one LORD," therefore "thou ſhalt love him with "all thy heart, &c. this is the firſt and great com-"mandment:" and it comprehends in it all the duties of the firſt table as naturally flowing from it. As that we ſhould ſerve him only, and pay no religious worſhip to any but to him. For to pay religious worſhip to any thing, is to make it a GOD and to acknowledge it for ſuch: and therefore GOD being but one, we can give religious worſhip to none

SERM. XLVIII.

but to him only. And among all the parts of religious worſhip, none is more peculiarly appropriated to the deity than ſolemn invocation and prayer. For he to whom men addreſs their requeſts at all times, and in all places, muſt be ſuppoſed to be always every where preſent, to underſtand all our deſires and wants, and to be able to ſupply them; and this GOD only is and can do.

So likewiſe from the unity of the divine nature may be inferred, that we ſhould not worſhip GOD by any ſenſible image or repreſentation: becauſe GOD being a ſingular being there is nothing like him, or that can without injuring and debaſing his moſt ſpiritual and perfect and immenſe being be compared to him: as he himſelf ſpeaks in the prophet, "To whom will ye liken me, ſaith the LORD, and "make me equal?" And therefore with no diſtinction whatſoever can it be lawful to give religious worſhip, or any part of it, to any but GOD: we can pray to none but to him, becauſe he only is every where preſent, and "only knows the hearts "of all the children of men;" which Solomon gives as the reaſon why we ſhould addreſs our ſupplications to GOD only, "who dwelleth in the hea-"vens."

Iſai. xlvi. 5.

1 Kings viii. 39.

So that the reaſon of theſe two precepts is founded in the unity and ſingularity of the divine nature, and unleſs there be more gods than one, we muſt worſhip him only, and pray to none but him: becauſe we can give invocation to none but to him only whom we believe to be GOD; as St. Paul reaſons, "How ſhall they call on him in whom they have "not believed?"

Rom. x. 14.

SERM. XLVIII.

II. The love likewise of our neighbour is founded in the unity of the divine nature, and may be inferred from it: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD thy "GOD is one LORD, therefore thou shalt love thy "neighbour as thyself." And the apostle gives this reason why all mankind should be at unity among themselves; "there is one GOD and Father of all," and therefore we should "keep the unity of the "spirit in the bond of peace," that is, live in mutual love and peace. The prophet likewise assigns this reason why all mankind should be upon good terms with one another, and not be injurious one to another, "Have we not all one Father? Hath not "one GOD created us? Why do we then deal treacherously every man against his brother."

Eph. iv. 6.

Mal. ii. 10.

And therefore when we see such hatred and enmity among men, such divisions and animosities among Christians, we may not only ask St. Paul's question, "Is CHRIST divided?" that we cannot agree about serving him; either all to serve him one way, or to bear with one another in our differences: I say we may not only ask St. Paul's question, "Is CHRIST divided?" But may ask farther, "Is GOD divided?" Is there not one GOD, and are we not all his offspring? Are we not all the sons of Adam, "who was the son of GOD?" So that if we trace ourselves to our original, we shall find a great nearness and equality among men: and this equality that we are all GOD's creatures and image, and that the one only GOD is the Father of us all, is a more real ground of mutual love, and peace, and equity in our dealings one with another, than any of those petty differences and distinctions of strong and

and weak, of rich and poor, of wise and foolish, of base and honourable, can be to encourage men to any thing of insolence, injustice, and inequality of dealing one towards another. Because that wherein we all agree, that we are the creatures and children of GOD and have all one common father, is essential and constant; but those things wherein we differ are accidental and mutable, and happen to one another by turns. SERM. XLVIII.

Thus much may suffice to have spoken concerning the first proposition in the text, "there is one "GOD:" to him, Father, Son, and holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, now and for ever. Amen.

Stead-

Steadfastneſs in Religion.

A

SERMON

Preached in the

Church of St. Lawrence-Jury, June 3. 1684.

THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

BEING, I hope, for the remainder of my life, releaſed from that irkſom and unpleaſant work of controverſy and wrangling about religion, I ſhall now turn my thoughts to ſomething more agreeable to my temper, and of a more direct and immediate tendency to the promoting of true religion, to the happineſs of human ſociety, and the reformation of the world.

I have no intention to reflect upon any that ſtand up in defence of the truth, and contend earneſtly for it, endeavouring in the ſpirit of meekneſs to reclaim thoſe that are in error. For I doubt not but a very good man may, upon ſeveral occaſions, be almoſt unavoidably engaged in controverſies of religion; and if he have a head clear and cool enough, ſo as to be maſter of his own notions and temper in that hot kind of ſervice, he may therein do conſiderable advantage to the truth: though a man that hath once drawn blood in controverſy, as Mr. Mede *expreſſeth it, is ſeldom known ever perfectly to recover his own good temper afterwards.*

For this reaſon a good man ſhould not be very willing, "when his lord comes," to "be found "ſo doing," and as it were "beating his fellow-"ſervants:" and all controverſy, as it is uſually managed, is little better. A good man would be loth to be taken out of the world reeking hot from a ſharp contention with a perverſe adverſary; and not a little out of countenance, to find himſelf in this temper tranſlated into the calm and peaceable regions of the bleſſed, where nothing but perfect charity and good-will reign for ever.

I know not whether St. Paul, who had been "taken up into the third heavens," did by that queſtion of his, "where is the diſputer of THIS WORLD *?" intend to inſinuate, that this wrangling work hath place only in this world, and upon this earth, where only there is a duſt to be raiſed; but will have no place in the other. But whether St. Paul intended this or not, the thing it ſelf I think is true, that in the other world all things will be clear and paſt diſpute. To be ſure, among the bleſſed; and probably alſo among the miſerable, unleſs fierce and furious contentions, with great heat without light, about things of no moment and concernment to them, ſhould be deſigned for a part of their torment.*

As to the following ſermons, I am ſenſible that the ſtile of them is more looſe and full of words, than is agreeable to juſt and exact diſcourſes: but ſo I think the ſtile of popular ſermons ought to be.

be. And therefore I have been not very careful to mend this matter; chuſing rather that they ſhould appear in that native ſimplicity in which, ſo many years ago, they were firſt framed, than dreſſed up with too much care and art. As they are, I hope, the candid and ingenuous readers will take them in good part.

And I do heartily wiſh, that all that are concerned in the reſpective duties, treated on in the following ſermons, would be perſuaded ſo to lay them to heart, as to put them effectually in practice: that how much ſoever the reformation of this corrupt and degenerate age in which we live is almoſt utterly to be deſpaired of, we may yet have a more comfortable proſpect of future times, by ſeeing the foundation of a better world begun to be laid in the careful and conſcientious diſcharge of the duties here mentioned: that by this means "the gene-" rations to come may know GOD, *and the chil-" dren yet unborn may fear the* LORD."

I have great reaſon to be ſenſible how faſt the infirmities of age are coming upon me, and therefore "muſt work the works of him," whoſe providence hath placed me in the ſtation wherein I am, "whilſt it is day, becauſe the night cometh "when no man can work."

I knew very well, before I entered upon this great and weighty charge, my own manifold defects, and how unequal my beſt abilities were for the due diſcharge of it; but I did not feel this ſo

ſenſibly as I now do every day more and more. And therefore that I might make ſome ſmall amends for greater failings, I knew not how better to place the broken hours I had to ſpare from almoſt perpetual buſineſs of one kind or other, than in preparing ſomething for the publick that might be of uſe to recover the decayed piety and virtue of the preſent age; in which iniquity doth ſo much abound, and the love of GOD *and religion is grown ſo cold.*

To this end I have choſen to publiſh theſe plain ſermons, and to recommend them to the ſerious peruſal and faithful practice both of the paſtors and people committed to my charge; earneſtly beſeeching Almighty GOD, *that by his bleſſing they may prove effectual to that good end for which they are ſincerely deſigned.*

SER-

SERMON XLIX.

Concerning Reſolution and Stedfaſtneſs in Religion.

JOSH. XXIV. 15.

—But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the LORD.

SERM. XLIX.

AFTER Joſhua had brought the people of Iſrael into the promiſed land, and ſettled them in the quiet poſſeſſion of it, his great deſire was to eſtabliſh them in the true religion, namely, in the worſhip of the one true GOD, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and given them the poſſeſſion of that good land, the land of Canaan.

And now finding himſelf weak and declining, being an hundred and ten years old, and fearing leſt after his death the people ſhould fall off from the true religion to the worſhip of idols, he, like a wiſe and good governor, conſiders with himſelf what courſe he had beſt to take to keep them firm and ſtedfaſt in their religion, and to prevent their defection to the idolatry of the nations round about them.

And to this end he calls a general aſſembly of all Iſrael, that is, of the elders, and heads, and judges, and officers of the ſeveral tribes; and in a very wiſe and eloquent ſpeech repreſents to them in what a miraculous manner GOD had "driven out the na- "tions before them, much greater and ſtronger na-

Ch. xxiii. 1.

SERM. XLIX.

" tions than they," and had given them their land to poſſeſs it. And, in a word, had performed punctually all that he had promiſed to them.

And therefore they ought " to take great heed to " themſelves, to love GOD and to ſerve him ;" and if they did not, he tells them that it ſhould " come to " paſs, that as all good things are come upon you " which the LORD your GOD promiſed you, ſo ſhall " the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until " he have deſtroyed you from off this good land " which the LORD your GOD hath given you."

Ch. xxiii. 15.

After this, he calls them together a ſecond time, and gives them a brief hiſtorical account and deduction of the great mercies of GOD to them and their fathers, from the days of Abraham, whom he had called out from among his idolatrous kindred and countrymen, unto that day.

From the conſideration of all which, he earneſtly exhorts them to renew their covenant with GOD ; and for his particular ſatisfaction, before he left the world, ſolemnly to promiſe that they would for ever ſerve GOD and forſake the ſervice of idols : " Now " therefore fear the LORD, and ſerve him in ſince- " rity and in truth : and put away the gods which " your fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, " and in Egypt ; and ſerve ye the LORD."

And then in the text, by a very elegant ſcheme of ſpeech he does, as it were, once more ſet them at liberty ; and, as if they had never engaged themſelves to GOD by covenant before, he leaves them to their free choice ; " and if it ſeem evil unto you to " ſerve the LORD, chuſe you this day whom ye " will

" will ſerve ; whether the gods whom your fathers SERM. XLIX.
" ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, or the gods
" of the Amorites in whoſe land ye dwell."

Not that they were at liberty whether they would ſerve the true GOD, or not ; but to inſinuate to them that religion ought to be their free choice : and likewiſe, that the true religion hath thoſe real advantages on it's ſide, that it may ſafely be referred to any conſiderate man's choice : " If it ſeem evil " unto you ;" as if he had ſaid, if after all the demonſtrations which GOD hath given, of his miraculous preſence among you, and the mighty obligations which he hath laid upon you by bringing you out of the land of Egypt and the houſe of bondage, by ſo out-ſtretched an arm ; and by driving out the nations before you, and giving you their land to poſſeſs : if after all this, you can think it fit to quit the ſervice of this GOD, and to worſhip the idols of the nations whom you have ſubdued, thoſe vanquiſhed and baffled deities ; if you can think it reaſonable ſo to do, but ſurely you cannot ; then take your choice : " If it ſeem evil unto you " to ſerve the LORD, chuſe you this day whom ye " will ſerve."

And to direct and encourage them to make a right choice, he declares to them his own reſolution, which he hopes will alſo be theirs ; and as he had heretofore been their captain, ſo now he offers himſelf to be their example : but whether they will follow him or not, he for his part is fixed and immoveable in this reſolution ; " But as for ME and my houſe, we " will ſerve the LORD."

In

SERM. XLIX.

In effect he tells them; I have propoſed the beſt religion to your choice, and I cannot but think, nay I cannot but hope, that you will all ſtedfaſtly adhere to it. It is ſo reaſonable and wiſe, ſo much your intereſt and your happineſs to do it. But if you ſhould do otherwiſe, if you ſhould be ſo weak as not to diſcern the truth, ſo wilful and ſo wicked as not to embrace it: though you ſhould all make another choice, and run away from the true GOD to the worſhip of idols; I for my part am ſtedfaſtly reſolved what to do: in a caſe ſo manifeſt, in a matter ſo reaſonable, no number, no example ſhall prevail with me to the contrary; I will, if need be, ſtand alone in that which is ſo evidently and unqueſtionably right: and though this whole nation ſhould revolt all at once from the worſhip of the true GOD, and join with the reſt of the world in a falſe religion and in the worſhip of idols; and mine were the only family left in all Iſrael, nay in the whole world, that continued to worſhip the GOD of Iſrael, I would ſtill be of the ſame mind; I would ſtill perſiſt in this reſolution, and act according to it; "as for "me and my houſe, we will ſerve the LORD."

A reſolution truly worthy of ſo great a prince and ſo good a man: in which he is a double pattern to us.

Firſt, of the brave reſolution of a good man, namely, that if there were occaſion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would ſtand alone in the profeſſion and practice of the true religion: "as for ME, I will ſerve the LORD."

Secondly,

Secondly, of the pious care of a good father and maſter of a family, to train up thoſe under his charge in the true religion and worſhip of GOD: "as for me and MY HOUSE, we will ſerve the "LORD." SERM. XLIX.

I ſhall at this time, by GOD's aſſiſtance, treat of the firſt of theſe, namely,

I. Of the brave reſolution of a good man, that if there were occaſion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would ſtand alone in the profeſſion and practice of GOD's true religion: "Chuſe "you this day," ſays Joſhua, "whom ye will "ſerve; but as for ME, I will ſerve the LORD." Joſhua here puts the caſe at the utmoſt extremity, that not only the great nations of the world, the Egyptians and Chaldeans, and all the leſſer nations round about them, and in whoſe land they dwelt, were all long ſince revolted to idolatry, and pretended great antiquity and long preſcription for the worſhip of their falſe gods: but he ſuppoſeth yet farther, that the only true and viſible church of GOD then known in the world, the people of Iſrael, ſhould likewiſe generally revolt and forſake the worſhip of the true GOD, and cleave to the ſervice of idols: yet in this caſe, if we could ſuppoſe it to happen, he declares his firm and ſtedfaſt reſolution to adhere to the worſhip of the true GOD: and though all others ſhould fall off from it, that he would ſtand alone in the profeſſion and practice of the true religion: "but as for ME, I will ſerve the "LORD." I.

S.

SERM. XLIX.

In the handling of this argument I ſhall do theſe two things.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the matter of this reſolution, and the due bounds and limits of it.

Secondly, I ſhall endeavour to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this reſolution from the objections, to which this ſingular and peremptory kind of reſolution may ſeem liable.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the matter of this reſolution, and the due bounds and limits of it.

1ſt. The matter of this reſolution. Joſhua here reſolves that if need were, and things were brought to that paſs, he would ſtand alone, or with very few adhering to him, in the profeſſion and practice of the true religion. And this is not a mere ſuppoſition of an impoſſible caſe, which can never happen: for it may, and hath really and in fact happened in ſeveral ages and places of the world.

There hath been a general apoſtaſy of ſome great part of GOD's church, from the belief and profeſſion of the true religion to idolatry, and to damnable errors and hereſies: and ſome good men have, upon the matter, ſtood alone in the open profeſſion of the true religion, in the midſt of this general defection from it.

Elijah in that general revolt of the people of Iſrael, when they had "forſaken the covenant of the "LORD, and broken down his altars, and ſlain his "prophets," and he only, as he thought, was left to ſtand alone: I ſay, in this caſe when, as he verily believed, he had no body to ſtand by him, "he was "very zealous for the LORD GOD of hoſts;" and

1 Kings xviii. 18.

with

with an undaunted courage ſtood up for the worſhip of the true GOD, and reproved Ahab to his face for his defection to the worſhip of idols. SERM. XLIX.

And thoſe three brave youths, in the prophecy of Daniel, did in the like reſolute and undaunted manner refuſe to obey the command of the great king Nebuchadnezzar, "to worſhip the image which he "had ſet up;" when all others ſubmitted, and paid honour to it: telling him plainly, "if it be ſo, our "GOD whom we ſerve is able to deliver us from the "burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out "of thy hand: if not, be it known unto thee, O "king, that we will not ſerve thy gods, nor wor-"ſhip the golden image which thou haſt ſet up." Dan. iii. v. 17, 18.

In like manner, and with the ſame ſpirit and courage, Daniel withſtood the decree of Darius, which forbad men to "aſk a petition of any god or man "for thirty days, ſave of the king only;" and this under the pain of being "caſt into the den of lions:" and when all others gave obedience to it, he "ſet "open the windows of his chamber towards Jeru-"ſalem, and kneeled down upon his knees three "times a day, and prayed and gave thanks, as he "did aforetime." Dan. vi. 7. v. 10.

In the prevalency of the Arian hereſy, Athanaſius almoſt ſtood alone in the profeſſion and maintenance of the truth. And in the reign of antichriſt, the true church of GOD is repreſented by a woman flying into the wilderneſs, and living there in obſcurity for a long time; inſomuch that the profeſſors of the truth ſhould hardly be found. And yet during that degeneracy of ſo great a part of the

SERM. XLIX.

Chriſtian church, and the prevalency of antichriſt for ſo many ages, ſome few in every age did appear who did reſolutely own the truth, and bear witneſs to it with their blood. But theſe did almoſt ſtand alone and by themſelves, like a few ſcattered ſheep wandering up and down in a wide wilderneſs.

Thus in the height of popery, Wickliffe appeared here in England; and Hierome of Prague, and John Huſs in Germany and Bohemia. And in the beginning of the reformation, when popery had quite overrun theſe weſtern parts of the world, and ſubdued her enemies on every ſide, and antichriſt ſat ſecurely in the quiet poſſeſſion of his kingdom; Luther aroſe, a bold and rough man, but a fit wedge to cleave in ſunder ſo hard and knotty a block; and appeared ſtoutly againſt the groſs errors and corruptions of the church of Rome: and for a long time ſtood alone, and with a moſt invincible ſpirit and courage maintained his ground, and reſiſted the united malice and force of antichriſt and his adherents; and gave him ſo terrible a wound, that he is not yet perfectly healed and recovered of it.

So that for a man to ſtand alone, or with a very few adhering to him and ſtanding by him, is not a mere imaginary ſuppoſition, but a caſe that hath really and in fact happened in ſeveral ages and places of the world. Let us then proceed to conſider in the

2d Place, the due limits and bounds of this peremptory reſolution. In all matters of faith and practice, which are plain and evident either from natural reaſon, or from divine revelation, this reſolution

lution ſeems to be very reaſonable: but in things doubtful a modeſt man, and every man hath reaſon to be ſo, would be very apt to be ſtaggered by the judgment of a very wiſe man; and much more of many ſuch, and eſpecially by the unanimous judgment of the generality of men; the general voice and opinion of mankind being next to the voice of GOD himſelf.

For in matters of an indifferent nature, which GOD hath neither commanded nor forbidden, ſuch as are many of the circumſtances and ceremonies of GOD's worſhip, a man would not be ſingular, much leſs ſtiff and immoveable in his ſingularity; but would be apt to yield and ſurrender himſelf to the general vote and opinion, and to comply with the common cuſtom and practice; and much more with the rules and conſtitutions of authority, whether civil or eccleſiaſtical. Becauſe in things lawful and indifferent, we are bound by the rules of decency and civility not to thwart the general practice; and by the commands of GOD, we are certainly obliged to obey the lawful commands of lawful authority.

But in things plainly contrary to the evidence of ſenſe or reaſon, or to the word of GOD, a man would compliment no man, or number of men; nor would he pin his faith upon any church in the world; much leſs upon any ſingle man, no not the pope; no, though there were never ſo many probable arguments brought for the proof of his infallibility.

In this caſe, a man would be ſingular and ſtand alone againſt the whole world; againſt the wrath and

SERM. XLIX.

and rage of a king, and all the terrors of his fiery furnace; as in other matters, a man would not believe all the learned men in the world againſt the clear evidence of ſenſe and reaſon. If all the great mathematicians of all ages, Archimedes, and Euclid, and Apollonius, and Diophantus, &c. could be ſuppoſed to meet together in a general council, and ſhould there declare in the moſt ſolemn manner, and give it under their hands and ſeals, that twice two did not make four, but five; this would not move me in the leaſt to be of their mind; nay, I who am no mathematician would maintain the contrary, and would perſiſt in it without being in the leaſt ſtartled by the poſitive opinion of theſe great and learned men; and ſhould moſt certainly conclude, that they were either all of them out of their wits, or that they were biaſſed by ſome intereſt or other, and ſwayed againſt the clear evidence of truth, and the full conviction of their own reaſon to make ſuch a determination as this. They might indeed overrule the point by their authority, but in my inward judgment I ſhould ſtill be where I was before.

Juſt ſo in matters of religion, if any church, though with never ſo glorious and confident a pretence to infallibility, ſhould declare for tranſubſtantiation, that is, that the bread and wine in the ſacrament, by virtue of the conſecration of the prieſt, are ſubſtantially changed into the natural body and blood of CHRIST; this is ſo notoriouſly contrary both to the ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, that a man would chuſe to ſtand ſingle in the oppoſition of it, and laugh at or rather pity the reſt of the

world, that could be ſo ſervilely blind as ſeemingly to conſpire in the belief of ſo monſtrous an abſurdity. SERM. XLIX.

And in like manner, if any church ſhould declare, that images are to be worſhipped; or that the worſhip of GOD is to be performed in an unknown tongue; and that the holy ſcriptures, which contain the word and will of GOD, and teach men what they are to believe and do in order to their eternal ſalvation, are to be locked up and kept concealed from the people in a language which they do not underſtand, leſt if they were permitted the free uſe of them in their mother tongue, they ſhould know more of the mind and will of GOD than is convenient for the common people to know, whoſe devotion and obedience to the church does mainly depend upon their ignorance: or ſhould declare, that the ſacrifice of CHRIST was not offered once for all, but is and ought to be repeated ten millions of times every day: and that the people ought to receive the communion in one kind only, and the cup by no means to be truſted with them for fear the profane beards of the laity ſhould drink of it: and that the ſaving efficacy of the ſacraments doth depend upon the intention of the prieſt, without which the receiver can have no benefit by them: theſe are all of them ſo plainly contrary to ſcripture, and moſt of them in reaſon ſo abſurd, that the authority of no church whatſoever can oblige a man to the belief of them.

Nay, I go yet farther, that being evidently contrary to the doctrine of the goſpel, though an apoſtle, or an angel from heaven ſhould declare them, we

SERM. XLIX.

we ought to reject them. And for this I have St. Paul's authority and warrant, who ſpeaking of ſome that perverted the goſpel of CHRIST by teaching things contrary to it, "though we," ſays he, "or "an angel from heaven, preach any other goſpel "unto you than that which we have preached unto "you, let him be accurſed: as we ſaid before, ſo "ſay I now again, though an apoſtle, though an "angel from heaven preach any other goſpel unto "you than that which ye have received, let him be "accurſed." You ſee he repeats it over again, to expreſs not only his own confident aſſurance, but the certainty of the thing. And here is an anathema with a witneſs, which we may confidently oppoſe to all the anathemas which the council of Trent hath ſo liberally denounced againſt all thoſe who ſhall preſume to gainſay theſe new doctrines of their church; which are in truth another goſpel, than that which our bleſſed SAVIOUR and his apoſtles taught: and yet on their ſide there is neither an apoſtle, nor an angel from heaven in the caſe.

Gal. i. 7. 8, 9.

To give but one inſtance more: if Bellarmine ſhall tell me, as he expreſly does, that "if the "pope ſhould declare virtue to be vice, and vice to "be virtue, I were bound to believe him unleſs "I would ſin againſt conſcience:" and if all the world ſhould ſay the ſame that Bellarmine does, namely, that this infallible declarer of virtue and vice were to be believed and followed; yet I could not poſſibly be of their mind, for this plain and undeniable reaſon; becauſe if virtue and vice be all one, then religion is nothing; ſince the main deſign of

religion

religion is to teach men the difference between virtue and vice, and to oblige them to practiſe the one and to refrain from the other: and if religion be nothing, then heaven and hell are nothing: and if heaven be nothing, then an infallible guide thither is of no uſe and to no manner of purpoſe; becauſe he is a guide no whither, and ſo his great office ceaſes and falls of itſelf. SERM. XLIX.

And now leſt any ſhould think me ſingular in this aſſertion, and that thereby I give a great deal too much to the ſingle judgment of private perſons, and too little to the authority of a church, I will produce the deliberate judgment of a very learned man and a great aſſertor of the church's authority, concerning the matter I am now ſpeaking of: I mean Mr. Hooker, in his deſervedly admired book of eccleſiaſtical polity. His words are theſe, "I grant," ſays he, "that proof derived from the authority of "man's judgment is not able to work that aſſu- "rance which doth grow by ſtronger proof: and "therefore although ten thouſand general councils "ſhould ſet down one and the ſame definitive ſen- "tence concerning any point of religion whatſo- "ever, yet one demonſtrative reaſon alledged, or "one teſtimony cited from the word of GOD him- "ſelf to the contrary, could not chuſe but over- "ſway them all: in as much as for them to be de- "ceived it is not ſo impoſſible, as it is that demon- "ſtrative reaſon or divine teſtimony ſhould deceive."

And again, "For men," ſays he, "to be tied "and led by authority, as it were with a kind of "captivity of judgment, and though there be rea-

SERM. XLIX.

" ſon to the contrary not to liſten to it, but follow " like beaſts the firſt in the herd, this were brutiſh."

Again, " That the authority of men ſhould pre- " vail with men, either againſt or above reaſon, is " no part of our belief. Companies of learned " men, though they be never ſo great and reverend, " are to yield unto reaſon, the weight whereof is no " whit prejudiced by the ſimplicity of the perſon " which doth alledge it; but being found to be " found and good, the bare opinion of men to the " contrary muſt of neceſſity ſtoop and give place." And this he delivers not only as his own particular judgment, but that which he apprehended to be the judgment of the church of England.

I have produced theſe clear and poſitive teſtimonies of ſo learned and judicious a perſon, and of ſo great eſteem in our church, on purpoſe to prevent any miſapprehenſion, as if by this diſcourſe I intended to derogate from the authority of the church and her juſt and reaſonable determinations, in things no wiſe contrary to plain reaſon or the word of GOD. And beyond this pitch no judicious proteſtant, that I know of, ever ſtrained the authority of the church. I proceed now in the

Second place, to vindicate the reaſonableneſs of this reſolution, from the objections to which this ſingular and peremptory kind of reſolution may ſeem liable, as

Obj. 1. Firſt, it may very ſpeciouſly be ſaid, that this does not ſeem modeſt for a man to ſet up his own private judgment againſt the general ſuffrage and vote.

vote. And it is very true, as I ſaid before, that about things indifferent a man ſhould not be ſtiff and ſingular; and in things doubtful and obſcure, a man ſhould not be over-confident of his own judgment, and inſiſt peremptorily upon it againſt the general opinion: but in things that are plain and evident, either from ſcripture or reaſon, it is neither immodeſty nor a culpable ſingularity, for a man to ſtand alone in defence of the truth. Becauſe in ſuch a caſe a man does not oppoſe his own ſingle and private judgment to the judgment of many, but the common reaſon of mankind and the judgment of GOD plainly declared in his word.

If the generality of men ſhould turn atheiſts and infidels, and ſhould deny the being of GOD, or his providence; the immortality of mens ſouls, and the rewards and puniſhments of another world: or ſhould deny the truth of the goſpel and of the Chriſtian religion, it would not certainly be any breach of modeſty for a man to appear ſingle, if no body elſe would ſtand by him, in the reſolute defence of theſe great truths.

In like manner when a whole church, though never ſo large and numerous, ſhall conſpire together to corrupt the Chriſtian religion ſo far as to impoſe upon mankind, under the name of Chriſtian doctrines and articles of faith, things plainly contrary to the ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, and to the clear and expreſs word of GOD, why muſt a man needs be thought immodeſt, if he oppoſe ſuch groſs errors and corruptions of the Chriſtian doctrine? And what reaſon have the church of Rome to talk of

SERM. XLIX.

modeſty in this caſe, when they themſelves have the face to impoſe upon mankind the belief of things contrary to what they and every man elſe ſees? As they do in their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation: and to require of them to do what GOD hath expreſly forbidden, as in the worſhip of images; beſides a great many other idolatrous practices of that church: to deny the people the free uſe of the holy ſcriptures, and the publick ſervice of GOD in a known tongue; contrary to the very end and deſign of all religion, and in affront to the common reaſon and liberty of mankind.

Obj. 2. Secondly, it is pretended that it is more prudent for private perſons to err with the church, than to be ſo pertinacious in their own opinions. To which I anſwer, that it may indeed be pardonable in ſome caſes to be led into miſtake by the authority of thoſe to whoſe judgment and inſtruction we ought to pay a great deference and ſubmiſſion: provided always it be in things which are not plain and neceſſary; but ſurely it can never be prudent to err with any number, how great ſoever, in matters of religion which are of moment, merely for numbers ſake: but to comply with the known errors and corruptions of any church whatſoever, is certainly damnable.

Obj. 3. Thirdly, it is pretended yet farther, that men ſhall ſooner be excuſed in following the church, than any particular man or ſect. To this I anſwer, that it is very true if the matter be doubtful, and eſpecially if the probabilities be equal, or near equal on both ſides: but if the error be groſs and

palpable, it will be no excuſe to have followed any number of men, or any church whatſoever. For here the competition is not between men and men, but between GOD and men: and in this caſe we muſt forſake all men to follow GOD and his truth. "Thou ſhalt in no wiſe follow a multitude in a "known error," is a rule which in reaſon is of equal obligation with that divine law, "thou ſhalt in no "wiſe follow a multitude to do evil;" or rather is comprehended in it, becauſe to comply with a known error is certainly to do evil. SERM. XLIX.

And this very objection the Jews made againſt our bleſſed SAVIOUR and the doctrine which he taught, that the guides and governors of the Jewiſh church did utterly differ from him, and were of a contrary mind; "have any of the rulers," ſay they, "believed on him?" What? will you be wiſer than your rulers and governors? What? follow the doctrine of one ſingle man againſt the unanimous judgment and ſentence of the great ſanhedrim, to whom the trial of doctrines and pretended prophets doth of right belong?

But as plauſible as this objection may ſeem to be, it is to be conſidered that in a corrupt and degenerate church, the guides and rulers of it are commonly the worſt, and the moſt deeply engaged in the errors and corruptions of it. They brought them in at firſt, and their ſucceſſors, who have been bred up in the belief and practice of them, are concerned to uphold and maintain them: and ſo long a preſcription gives a kind of ſacred ſtamp even to error, and an authority not to be oppoſed and reſiſted.

And

SERM. XLIX.

And thus it was in the corrupt ſtate of the Jewiſh church, in our SAVIOUR's time: and ſo likewiſe in that great degeneracy of the Chriſtian church, in the times of popery, their rulers made them to err: inſomuch that when Martin Luther appeared in oppoſition to the errors and ſuperſtitions of that church, and was hard preſſed with this very objection which the Phariſees urged againſt our SAVIOUR, he was forced to bolt out a kind of unmannerly truth, *religio nunquam magis periclitatur quàm inter reverendiſſimos*, "religion," ſays he, "is "never in greater hazard and worſe treated, than "amongſt the moſt reverend;" meaning the pope and his cardinals, and all the Romiſh hierarchy who had their dependance upon them.

Obj. 4. Fourthly, it is objected, that as on the one hand there may be danger of error in following blindly the belief of the church, ſo on the other hand there is as great a danger of ſchiſm in forſaking the communion of the church upon pretence of errors and corruptions. Very true; but where great errors and corruptions are not only pretended, but are real and evident: and where our compliance with thoſe errors and corruptions is made a neceſſary condition of our communion with that church: in that caſe, the guilt of ſchiſm, how great a crime ſoever it be, doth not fall upon thoſe who forſake the communion of that church, but upon thoſe who drive them out of it by the ſinful conditions which they impoſe upon them.

And this is truly the caſe between us and the church of Rome, as we are ready to make good, and

and have fully done it upon all occaſions; and they have never yet been able to vindicate and clear themſelves of thoſe groſs errors and corruptions which have been charged upon them, and which they require of all their members as neceſſary conditions of communion with them here, and of eternal ſalvation hereafter.

For we do not object to them doubtful matters, but things as plain as any are contained in the bible, as every body would ſee if they durſt but let every body read it. The worſhip of images is there as plainly forbidden in the decalogue, as murder and adultery are. The communion in both kinds is as expreſs an inſtitution of our SAVIOUR, as any in all the new teſtament; and even as the ſacrament of the LORD'S-ſupper it ſelf; only that church pretends to a diſpenſing power, as a privilege inherent in their church and inſeparable from it.

And, to add but one inſtance more; publick prayers and the ſervice of GOD in an unknown tongue, are as plainly and fully declared againſt by St. Paul, in a long chapter upon this ſingle argument, as any one thing in all his epiſtles.

Theſe things are plain and undeniable, and being ſo, are a full juſtification not only of the church of England, in the reformation which ſhe thought fit to make within her ſelf from the groſs errors and corruptions of the church of Rome; but likewiſe of particular perſons who have at any time for the ſame reaſons withdrawn themſelves from her communion, in any of the popiſh countries: yea though that ſingle perſon ſhould happen to be in thoſe circumſtances

SERM. XLIX.

cumſtances that he could not have the opportunity of holding communion with any other church, that was free from thoſe errors and corruptions, and which did not impoſe them as neceſſary conditions of communion.

For if any church fall off to idolatry, every good Chriſtian not only may, but ought to forſake her communion; and ought rather to ſtand ſingle and alone in the profeſſion of the pure and true religion, than to continue in the communion of a corrupt and idolatrous church.

I know that ſome men are ſo fond of the name of a church, that they can very hardly believe that any thing which bears that glorious title can miſcarry, or do any thing ſo much amiſs as to give juſt occaſion to any of her members to break off from her communion. What? the church err? That is ſuch an abſurdity, as is by many thought ſufficient to put any objection out of countenance. That the whole church, that is, that all the Chriſtians in the world ſhould at any time fall off to idolatry and into errors and practices directly contrary to the Chriſtian doctrine revealed in the holy ſcriptures, is on all hands, I think, denied: but that any particular church may fall into ſuch errors and practices is, I think, as univerſally granted: only in this caſe they demand to have the Roman catholick church excepted: and why I pray? Becauſe though the Roman church is a particular church, it is alſo the univerſal church; if this can be, and good ſenſe can be made of a particular univerſal church, then the Roman church may demand this high privilege of being exempted from the fate

of

of all other churches; but if the Roman chatholick, that is a particular univerſal church be a groſs and palpable contradiction, then it is plain that the church of Rome hath no more pretence to this privilege, than any other particular church whatſoever.

And which is yet more, ſome men talk of theſe matters at that rate, as if a man, who thought himſelf obliged to quit the communion of the church of Rome, ſhould happen to be in thoſe circumſtances that he had no opportunity of joining himſelf to any other communion, he ought in that caſe to give over all thoughts of religion, and not be ſo conceited and preſumptuous as to think of going to heaven alone by himſelf.

It is without doubt a very great ſin to deſpiſe the communion of the church, or to break off from it ſo long as we can continue in it without ſin: but if things ſhould once come to that paſs, that we muſt either diſobey GOD for company, or ſtand alone in our obedience to him, we ought moſt certainly to obey GOD whatever comes of it; and to profeſs his truth, whether any body elſe will join with us in that profeſſion or not.

And they who ſpeak otherwiſe condemn the whole reformation, and do in effect ſay that Martin Luther had done a very ill thing in breaking off from the church of Rome, if no body elſe would have joined with him in that honeſt deſign. And yet if it had been ſo, I hope GOD would have given him the grace and courage to have ſtood alone in ſo good and glorious a cauſe, and to have laid down his life for it.

SERM. XLIX.

And for any man to be of another opinion, is juſt as if a man upon great deliberation ſhould chuſe rather to be drowned, than to be ſaved either by a plank or a ſmall boat; or to be carried into the harbour any other way, than in a great ſhip of ſo many hundred tuns.

In ſhort, a good man muſt reſolve to obey GOD and to profeſs his truth, though all the world ſhould happen to do otherwiſe. CHRIST hath promiſed to preſerve his church "to the end of the world," that is, he hath engaged his word that he will take care there ſhall always be, in ſome part of the world or other, ſome perſons that ſhall make a ſincere profeſſion of his true religion.

But he hath no where promiſed to preſerve any one part of his church from ſuch errors and corruptions, as may oblige all good men to quit the communion of that part; yea, though when they have done ſo, they may not know whither to reſort for actual communion with any other ſound part of the Chriſtian church. As it happened to ſome particular perſons, during the reign and rage of popery in theſe weſtern parts of the Chriſtian church.

The reſult from all this diſcourſe is, to confirm and eſtabliſh us all, in this "hour of temptation" and of "the powers of darkneſs," in the well-grounded belief of the neceſſity and juſtice of our reformation from the errors and corruptions of the Roman church. And to engage us "to hold faſt the "profeſſion of our faith without wavering:" and not only to profeſs and promiſe as Peter did to our LORD, "though all men forſake thee, yet will not I:"

SERM. XLIX.

but if there ſhould be occaſion, to perform and make good this promiſe with the hazard of all that is dear to us, and even of life it ſelf. And whatever trials GOD may permit any of us to fall into, to take up the pious reſolution of Joſhua here in the text, that whatever others do, "we will "ſerve the LORD."

I will conclude my diſcourſe, upon this firſt particular in the text, with the exhortation of St. Paul to the Philippians, "only let your converſation be "as it becometh the goſpel of CHRIST. Stand "faſt in one ſpirit, be of one mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the goſpel: in nothing "terrified by your adverſaries, which to them is "an evident token of perdition, but to you of ſalvation, and that of GOD." Ch. i. v. 27.

And thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to the firſt thing in the text, namely, the pious reſolution of Joſhua, that if there were occaſion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would ſtand alone in the profeſſion and practice of GOD's true religion: "chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve, "but as for me, I will ſerve the LORD."

I ſhould now have proceeded to the ſecond thing, and which indeed I chiefly intended to ſpeak to from this text, namely, the pious care of a good father and maſter of a family, to train up thoſe under his charge in the religion and worſhip of the true GOD "as for me and MY HOUSE, we will "ſerve the LORD." But this I ſhall now enter upon, but defer it to ſome other opportunity. "Conſider what ye have heard, and the LORD give "you underſtanding in all things."

SERMON L.

Concerning Family-Religion.

Preached at St. Lawrence-Jury, July 13, 1684.

JOSH. XXIV. 15.

—But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the LORD.

SERM. L.

I SHALL now proceed to the ſecond point contained in the text, namely,

II. II. The pious care of a good maſter and father of a family, to train up thoſe under his charge in the worſhip and ſervice of the true GOD: "as for me "and my houſe, we will ſerve the LORD."

And this is the more neceſſary to be ſpoken to, becauſe it is a great and very eſſential part of religion, but ſtrangely overlooked and neglected in this looſe and degenerate age in which we live. It is a great part of religion; for next to our perſonal homage and ſervice to Almighty GOD, and the care of our own ſouls, it is incumbent upon us to make thoſe, who are under our charge and ſubject to our authority, GOD's ſubjects, and his children and ſervants; which is a much more honourable and happy relation, than that which they bear to us.

Our children are a natural part of ourſelves, and the reſt of our family are a civil and political part: and

and not only we ourſelves, but all that we have and that belongs to us is GOD's, and ought to be devoted to his ſervice. And they that have the true fear of GOD themſelves, will be careful to teach it to others; to thoſe eſpecially who are under their more immediate care and inſtruction. And therefore GOD had ſo great a confidence concerning Abraham as to this particular, as to undertake for him, that being ſo very good a man himſelf, he would not fail in ſo great and neceſſary a part of his duty. "For I know him," ſays GOD of him, "that he will command his chil- "dren and his houſhold after him, and they ſhall "keep the word of the LORD, to do juſtice and "judgment." GOD paſſeth his word for him, that he would not only take care to inſtruct his children and the reſt of his numerous family in the true religion, but that he would likewiſe lay a ſtrict charge upon them to propagate and tranſmit it to their poſterity.

SERM. L.

And this certainly is the duty of all fathers and maſters of families; and an eſſential part of religion, next to ſerving GOD in our own perſons, to be very careful that all that belong to us do the ſame. For every man muſt not only give an account of himſelf to GOD, but of thoſe likewiſe that are committed to his charge, that they do not miſcarry through his neglect.

In ſpeaking of this great and neceſſary duty, I ſhall do theſe four things.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew wherein it doth conſiſt.

Secondly, I ſhall conſider our obligation to it, both in point of duty and of intereſt.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, I ſhall enquire into the cauſes of the ſo common and ſhameful neglect of this duty, to the exceeding great decay of piety amongſt us.

Fourthly, as a motive and argument to us to endeavour to retrieve the practice of this duty, I ſhall repreſent to you the pernicious conſequences of the neglect of it, both with regard to ourſelves and to the publick. In all which I ſhall be very brief, becauſe things that are plain need not to be long.

I. I ſhall ſhew wherein the practice of this duty doth conſiſt. And in this I am ſure there is no need to be long, becauſe this duty is much better known than practiſed. The principal parts of it are theſe following.

Firſt, by ſetting up the conſtant worſhip of God in our families. By daily prayers to God, every morning and evening; and by reading ſome portion of the holy ſcriptures at thoſe times, eſpecially out of the pſalms of David, and the new teſtament. And this is ſo neceſſary to keep alive and to maintain a ſenſe of God and religion in the minds of men, that where it is neglected I do not ſee how any family can in reaſon be eſteemed a family of Chriſtians, or indeed to have any religion at all.

And there are not wanting excellent helps to this purpoſe for thoſe that ſtand in need of them, as I think moſt families do for the due and decent diſcharge of this ſolemn duty of prayer: I ſay, there are excellent helps to this purpoſe, in the ſeveral books of devotion calculated for the private uſe of families, as well as for ſecret prayers in our cloſets.

So

So that beſides the reading of the holy ſcriptures, which are the great fountains of divine truth; we may do well likewiſe to add to theſe other pious and profitable books, which by their plainneſs are fitted for the inſtruction of all capacities in the moſt neceſſary points of belief and practice: of which ſort, GOD be thanked, there is an abundant ſtore; but none that I think is more fitted for general and conſtant uſe, than that excellent book ſo well known by the title of "the whole duty of man:" becauſe it is conveniently divided into parts or ſections; one of which may be read in the family, at any time when there is leiſure for it; but more eſpecially on the LORD's day, when the whole family may the more eaſily be brought and kept together, and have the opportunity to attend upon theſe things without diſtraction.

And, which I muſt by no means omit, becauſe it is in many families already gone, and in others going out of faſhion: I mean a ſolemn acknowledgment of the providence of GOD, by begging his bleſſing at our meals, upon his good creatures provided for our uſe; and by returning thanks to him for the benefit and refreſhment of them: this being a piece of natural religion owned and practiſed in all ages, and in moſt places of the world; but never ſo ſhamefully and ſcandalouſly neglected, and I fear by many ſlighted and deſpiſed, as it is amongſt us at this day: and moſt neglected where there is greateſt reaſon for the doing of it, I mean at the moſt plentiful tables, and among thoſe of higheſt quality: as if great perſons were aſhamed, or thought ſcorn to

own

SERM. L.

own from whence these blessings come; like the nation of the Jews, of whom GOD complains in the prophet, "she knew not that I gave her corn, "and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and "gold:" she knew not, that is, she would not acknowledge from whose bounty all these blessings came: or, as if the poor were obliged to thank GOD for a little, but those who are fed to the full, and whose cups overflow, so that they are almost every day surfeited of plenty, were not at least equally bound to make returns of thankful acknowledgment to the great giver of all good things; and to implore his bounty and blessing, upon whom "the eyes of all do wait," that "he may give them their meat in due season."

Hos. ii. 8.

"O crooked and perverse generation!" Do you thus reason? "Do ye thus requite the LORD, foolish and unwise?" This is a very sad and broad sign of the prevalency of atheism and infidelity among us, when so natural and so reasonable a piece of religion, so meet and equal an acknowledgment of the constant and daily care and providence of almighty GOD towards us, begins to grow out of date and use; in a nation professing religion, and the belief of the being and providence of GOD. Is it not a righteous thing with GOD to take away his blessings from us, when we deny him this just and easy tribute of praise and thanksgiving? "Shall "not GOD visit for this horrible ingratitude? And "shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as "this? Hear, O heavens, and be ye horribly astonished at this!" I hope it cannot be thought misbecoming the meanest of GOD's ministers, in a matter

matter wherein the honour of God is so nearly concerned, to reprove, even in the highest and greatest of the sons of men, so shameful and heinous a fault, with a proportionable vehemence and severity. SERM. L.

Secondly, another, and that also a very considerable part of this duty, consists in instructing those committed to our charge in the fundamental principles, and in the careful practice of the necessary duties of religion; instilling these into children in their tender years, as they are capable of them, "line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a "little and there a little;" and into those that are more grown up, by proper and suitable means of instruction, and by furnishing them with such books as are most proper to teach them those things in religion, which are most necessary by all to be believed and practised.

And in order hereunto we should take care that those under our charge, our children and servants, should be taught to read, because this will make the business of instruction much easier; so that if they are diligent and well-disposed they may, after having been taught the first principles of religion, by reading the holy scriptures and other good books, greatly improve themselves, so as to be prepared to receive much greater benefit and advantage by the publick teaching of their ministers.

And in this work of instruction, our great care should be to plant those principles of religion in our children and servants which are most fundamental and necessary, and are like to have the greatest and

SERM. L.

moſt laſting influence upon their whole lives: as right and worthy apprehenſions of GOD, eſpecially of his infinite goodneſs, and that "he is of purer "eyes than to behold iniquity:" and a lively ſenſe alſo of the great evil and danger of ſin: a firm belief of the immortality of our ſouls, and of the unſpeakable and endleſs rewards and puniſhments of another world. If theſe principles once take root, they will ſpread ſtrangely, and probably ſtick by them and continue with them all their days.

Whereas if we plant in them doubtful doctrines and opinions, and inculcate upon them the notions of a ſect, and the jargon of a party, this will turn to a very pitiful account, and we muſt expect that our harveſt will be anſwerable to our huſbandry: "we "have ſown the wind, and ſhall reap the whirl-"wind." But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more particularly and fully in the enſuing ſermons concerning the good education of children.

And this work of inſtruction of thoſe that are under our charge, as it ought not to be neglected at other times, ſo is it more peculiarly ſeaſonable on the LORD's day, which ought to be employed by us to religious purpoſes, and in the exerciſes of piety and devotion: chiefly in the publick worſhip and ſervice of GOD, upon which we ſhould take care that our children and ſervants ſhould diligently and devoutly attend. Becauſe there GOD affords the means which he hath appointed for the begetting and increaſing of piety and goodneſs, and to which he hath promiſed a more eſpecial bleſſing: there they will have the opportunity of joining in the pub-

publick prayers of GOD's church, and of ſharing in the unſpeakable benefit and advantage of them: and there they will alſo have the advantage of being inſtructed by the miniſters of GOD in the doctrine of ſalvation, and the way to eternal life; and of being powerfully incited to the practice of piety and virtue.

There likewiſe they will be invited to the LORD's table, to participate of the holy ſacrament of CHRIST's moſt bleſſed body and blood; which being the moſt ſolemn inſtitution of the Chriſtian religion, the frequent participation whereof is by our bleſſed LORD, in remembrance of his dying love, enjoined upon all Chriſtians, we ought to take a very particular care that thoſe who are under our charge, ſo ſoon as they are capable of it, be duly inſtructed and prepared for it; that ſo, as often as opportunity is offered for it, they may be preſent at this holy action, and partake of the ineſtimable benefits and comforts of it.

And when the publick worſhip of that day is over, our families ſhould be inſtructed at home, by having the ſcriptures and other good books read to them; and care likewiſe ſhould be taken that they do this themſelves; this being the chief opportunity that moſt of them, eſpecially thoſe that are ſervants, have of minding the buſineſs of religion, and thinking ſeriouſly of another world.

And therefore I cannot but think it of very great conſequence to the maintaining and keeping alive of religion in the world, that this day be religiouſly obſerved, and ſpent as much as may be in the exer-

SERM. L.

cises of piety, and in the care of our souls. For surely every one that hath a true sense of religion, will grant that it is necessary that some time should be solemnly set apart for this purpose, which is of all other our greatest concernment: and they who neglect this so proper season and opportunity, will hardly find any other time for it: especially those who are under the government and command of others, as children and servants, who are seldom upon any other day allowed to be so much masters of their time, as upon this day.

Thirdly, I add farther, as a considerable part of the duty of parents and masters of families, if they be desirous to have their children and servants religious in good earnest, and would set them forward in the way to heaven, that they do not only allow them time and opportunity, but that they do also strictly and earnestly charge them to retire themselves every day, but more especially on the LORD's day, morning and evening, to pray to GOD for the forgiveness of their sins, and for his mercy and blessing upon them; and likewise to praise him for all his favours and benefits conferred upon them from day to day.

And in order to this, they ought to take care that their children and servants be furnished with such short forms of prayer and praise, as are proper and suitable to their capacities and conditions respectively; because there are but very few that know how to set about and perform these duties, especially at first, without some helps of this kind.

Fourthly

Fourthly and laſtly, another principal part of this duty conſiſts in giving good example to our families. This was David's reſolution, "I will behave myſelf "wiſely in a perfect way, I will walk within my "houſe with a perfect heart." Take great care to be exemplary to thy family in the beſt things; in a conſtant and devout ſerving of GOD, and in a ſober and prudent and unblameable converſation. SERM. L. Pſ. ci. 2.

One of the beſt and moſt effectual ways to make thoſe, who are under our care and authority, good, is to be good our ſelves, and by our good example to ſhew them the way to be ſo. Without this our beſt inſtructions will ſignify but very little, and the main force and efficacy of them will be loſt. We undermine the beſt inſtructions we can give, when they are not ſeconded and confirmed by our own example and practice. The want of this will weaken the authority of all our good counſel, and very little reverence and obedience will be paid to it. The precepts and admonitions of a very good man have in them a great power of perſuaſion, and are apt ſtrongly to move and to inflame others to "go "and do likewiſe:" but the good inſtructions of a bad man are languid and faint, and of very little force; becauſe they give no heart and encouragement to follow that counſel, which they ſee he that gives it does not think fit to take himſelf. But of this likewiſe I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more fully in the following diſcourſes concerning the good education of children. And thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken of the firſt thing which I propoſed, namely, wherein the practice of this duty doth conſiſt. I proceed to the ſecond, namely, II. To

SERM. L.

II. To consider our obligation to it, both in point of duty and of interest.

First, in point of duty. All authority over others is a talent entrusted with us by GOD for the benefit and good of others; and for which we are accountable, if we do not improve it and make use of it to that end. We are obliged by all lawful means to provide for the temporal welfare of our family, to feed and clothe their bodies, and to give them a comfortable subsistence here in the world: and surely much more are we obliged to take care of their souls, and to consult their eternal happiness in another life; in comparison of which all temporal concernments and considerations are as nothing.

It would be accounted a very barbarous thing in a father or master to suffer a child to starve for want of the necessaries of life, food and raiment, and all the world would cry shame upon them for it: but how much greater cruelty must it in reason be thought to let an immortal soul, and one for whom CHRIST died, perish for want of knowledge and necessary instruction for the attaining of eternal salvation?

The apostle St. Paul thinks no words bad enough for those who neglect the temporal welfare of their families, "he that provideth not," saith he, "for "his own, especially for those of his own house, "hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;" that is, he does not deserve the name of a Christian, who neglects a duty to which from the plain dictates of nature a heathen thinks himself obliged. What then shall be said for them who take no care to

provide for the everlasting happiness, and to prevent the eternal misery and ruin of those who are so immediately under their charge, and so very nearly related to them? SERM. L.

We are obliged to procure the happiness of our children not only by the laws of Christianity, but likewise by all the natural bonds of duty and affection. For our children are a part of our selves, and if they perish by our fault and neglect, it will be a perpetual wound and sting to us; their blood will be upon our heads, and the guilt of it will for ever lye at our doors.

Nay, we are obliged likewise in justice, and by way of reparation, to take all possible care of their happiness; for we have conveyed a sad inheritance to them, in those corrupt and evil inclinations which they have derived from us: and therefore we should with the greatest care and diligence endeavour to rectify their perverse natures, and to cure those cursed dispositions to evil which we have transmitted to them: and since GOD hath been pleased in so much mercy to provide, by the abundant grace of the gospel, so powerful a remedy for this hereditary disease of our corrupt and degenerate nature, we should do what in us lies, that they may partake of the blessing and benefit of it.

And as to other members of our family, whether they be servants, or other relations of whom we have taken the charge; common humanity will oblige us to be concerned for their happiness as they are men, and of the same nature with our selves; and charity likewise, as they are Christians and baptised

tiſed into the ſame faith, and capable of the ſame common ſalvation, does yet more ſtrictly oblige us by all means to endeavour that they may be made partakers of it; eſpecially ſince they are committed to our care, and for that reaſon we muſt expect to be accountable to God for them.

So that our obligation in point of duty is very clear and ſtrong, and if we be remiſs and negligent in the diſcharge of it, we can never anſwer it either to God, or to our own conſciences: which I hope will awaken us all who are concerned in it to the ſerious conſideration of it, and effectually engage us for the future to the faithful and conſcientious performance of it.

Secondly, we are hereto likewiſe obliged in point of intereſt; becauſe it is really for our ſervice and advantage that thoſe that belong to us ſhould ſerve and fear God: religion being the beſt and ſureſt foundation of the duties of all relations, and the beſt caution and ſecurity for the true diſcharge and performance of them.

Would we have dutiful and obedient children, diligent and faithful ſervants? Nothing will ſo effectually oblige them to be ſo, as the fear of God and the principles of religion firmly ſettled and rooted in them. Abraham, who by the teſtimony of God himſelf was ſo eminent an example in this kind, both of a good father and a good maſter of his family, found the good ſucceſs of his religious care in the happy effects of it, both upon his ſon Iſaac, and his chief ſervant and ſteward of his houſe, Eliezer of Damaſcus.

What

SERM. L.

What an unexampled inſtance of the moſt profound reſpect and obedience to the commands of his father did Iſaac give, when without the leaſt murmuring or reluctancy he ſubmitted to be bound and laid upon the altar, and to have been ſlain for a ſacrifice; if GOD had not, by an angel ſent on purpoſe, interpoſed to prevent it?

What an admirable ſervant to Abraham was the ſteward of his houſe, Eliezer of Damaſcus? How diligent and faithful was he in his maſter's ſervice? So that he truſted him in his greateſt concernments and with all that he had. And when he employed him in that great affair of the marriage of his ſon Iſaac, what pains did he take, what prudence did he uſe, what fidelity did he ſhew in the diſcharge of that great truſt, giving himſelf no reſt till he had accompliſhed the buſineſs he was ſent about? GOD ſeems purpoſely to have left theſe two inſtances upon record in ſcripture, to encourage fathers and maſters of families to a religious care of their children and ſervants.

And to ſhew the power of religion to oblige men to their duty, I will add but one inſtance more. How did the fear of GOD ſecure Joſeph's fidelity to his maſter, in the caſe of a very great and violent temptation? When there was nothing elſe to reſtrain him from ſo lewd and wicked an act, and to which he was ſo powerfully tempted, the conſideration of the great truſt his maſter repoſed in him and the ſenſe of his duty to him, but above all the fear of GOD preſerved him from conſenting to ſo vile and wicked an action, "how can I," ſays he, "do "this great wickedneſs and ſin againſt GOD?"

So that in prudence, and from a wiſe conſideration of the great benefit and advantage which will thereby redound to us, we ought with the greateſt care to inſtil the principles of religion into thoſe that belong to us. For if the ſeeds of true piety be ſown in them, we ſhall reap the fruits of it: and if this be neglected, we ſhall certainly find the miſchief and inconvenience of it. If our children and ſervants be not taught to fear and reverence God, how can we expect that they ſhould reverence and regard us? At leaſt we can have no ſure hold of them. For nothing but religion lays an obligation upon conſcience, nor is there any other certain bond of duty and obedience and fidelity: men will break looſe from all other ties when a fit occaſion and a fair opportunity doth ſtrongly tempt them. And as religion is neceſſary to procure the favour of God, and all the comfort and happineſs which that brings along with it, ſo it is neceſſary likewiſe to ſecure the mutual duties and offices of men to one another. I proceed to the third thing which I propoſed, namely,

III. To enquire into the cauſes of the ſo common and ſhameful neglect of this duty, to the exceeding great decay of piety among us. And this may in part be aſcribed to our civil confuſions and diſtractions, but chiefly to our diſſentions and differences in religion, which have not only divided and ſcattered our parochial churches and congregations, but have entred likewiſe into our families, and made great diſturbances and diſorders there.

First,

SERM. L.

Firſt, this may in good part be aſcribed to our civil confuſions and diſtractions, which for the time do lay all laws aſleep, and do not only occaſion a general licentiouſneſs and diſſoluteneſs of manners, but have uſually a proportionable bad influence upon the order and government of families; by weakning the authority of thoſe that govern, and by giving the opportunity of greater licenſe to thoſe that ſhould be governed: for when publick laws loſe their authority, it is hard to maintain and keep up the ſtrict rules and orders of families, which after a great and long diſorder are very hard to be retrieved and recovered.

Secondly, this great neglect and decay of religious order in families is chiefly owing to our diſſentions and differences in religion, upon occaſion whereof many under the pretence of conſcience have broke looſe into a boundleſs liberty. So that among the manifold ill conſequences of our diviſions in religion this is none of the leaſt, that the religious order of families hath been in a great meaſure broken and diſſolved. Some will not meet at the ſame prayer in the family, nor go to the ſame church and place of publick worſhip; and upon that pretence take the liberty to do what they pleaſe, and under colour of ſerving God in a different way according to their conſciences, do either wholly or in great meaſure neglect the worſhip of God; nay, it is well if they do not at that time haunt and frequent places of debauchery and lewdneſs; which they may ſafely do, being from under the eye of their parents and maſters: however, by this means it becomes

SERM. L.

impoſſible for the moſt careful maſters of families, to take an account of thoſe under their charge, how they ſpend their time on the LORD'S-DAY, and to train them up in any certain and orderly way of religion.

And this methinks is ſo great and ſenſible an inconvenience, and hath had ſuch diſmal effects in many families, as ought effectually to convince us of the neceſſity of endeavouring a greater union in matters of religion; and to put us in mind of thoſe happy days when GOD was ſerved in one way, and whole "families went to the houſe of GOD in "companies;" and fathers and maſters had their children and ſervants continually under their eye, and they were all united in their worſhip and devotion, both in their own houſes, and in the houſe of GOD; and by this means the work of religious education and inſtruction was effectually carried on, and a ſteady authority and decent order was maintained in families; men were edified and built up in religion, and GOD in all things was glorified.

And we may aſſure our ſelves, that till we are better agreed in matters of religion, and our unhappy and childiſh differences are laid aſide; and till the publick and unanimous worſhip of GOD do in ſome meaſure recover it's reputation, the good order and government of families as to the great ends of religion is never likely to obtain and to have any conſiderable effect. Which I hope will make all men who heartily love GOD and religion, to conſider ſeriouſly how neceſſary it is to put an end to theſe differences; that in our private families, as well

well as in the publick aſſemblies of the church, we may "with one mind and with one mouth glorify "God, even the Father of our LORD JESUS "CHRIST."

"I beſeech you therefore, brethren," as St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians, "by the name of our LORD "JESUS CHRIST, that ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, "and that there be no diviſions among you, but that "ye be perfectly joined together in the ſame mind, "and in the ſame judgment;" that is, ſo far as is neceſſary to the "keeping of the unity of the ſpirit "in the bond of peace," and to prevent diviſions and ſeparations among Chriſtians. I proceed to the fourth and laſt thing I propoſed, and which remains to be very briefly ſpoken to, namely,

1 Cor. i. 10.

IV. The very miſchievous and fatal conſequences of the neglect of this duty, both to the publick, and to our ſelves.

Firſt, to the publick. Families are the firſt ſeminaries of religion, and if care be not there taken to prepare perſons, eſpecially in their tender years, for publick teaching and inſtruction, it is like to have but very little effect. The neglect of a due preparation of our children and ſervants at home, to make them capable of profiting by what they hear and may learn at church, is like an error in the firſt concoction which can hardly ever be corrected afterwards. So that in this firſt neglect the foundation of an infinite miſchief is laid; becauſe if no care be taken of perſons in their younger years, when

SERM. L.

when they are moſt capable of the impreſſions of religion, how can it reaſonably be expected that they ſhould come to good afterwards? And if they continue void of the fear of GOD, which there hath been no care taken to plant in them, they will almoſt neceſſarily be bad in all relations; undutiful children, ſlothful and unfaithful ſervants, ſcandalous members of the church, unprofitable to the commonwealth, diſobedient to governors both eccleſiaſtical and civil; and in a word, burthens of the earth, and ſo many plagues of human ſociety: and this evil, if no remedy be applied to it, will continually grow worſe, and diffuſe and ſpread it ſelf farther in every age, till impiety and wickedneſs, infidelity and profaneneſs have overrun all, and the world be ripe for it's final ruin: juſt as it was before the deſtruction of the old world, when "the wickedneſs of man was great "upon the earth," and "all fleſh had corrupted their "way," then "the flood came and ſwept them "all away."

Secondly, the conſequences of this neglect will likewiſe be very diſmal to our ſelves. We ſhall firſt of all others feel the inconvenience, as we had the greateſt ſhare in the guilt of it. We can have no manner of ſecurity of the duty and fidelity of thoſe of our family to us, if they have no ſenſe of religion, no fear of GOD before their eyes. If we have taken no care to inſtruct them in their duty to GOD, it is no wiſe probable that they will make conſcience of their duty to us.

So

So that we ſhall have the firſt ill conſequences of their miſcarriage, beſides the ſhame and ſorrow of it: and not only ſo, but all the evil they commit ever after, will be in a great meaſure chargeable upon us, and will be put upon our ſcore in the judgment of the great day. It ought to make us tremble to think with what bitterneſs and rage our children and ſervants will then fly in our faces, for having been the cauſe of their eternal ruin, for want of due care on our part to prevent it. In that day, next to GOD and our own conſciences, our moſt terrible accuſers will be thoſe of our own houſe, nay thoſe that came out of our own bowels, and were not only part of our family, but even of our ſelves. But this alſo I ſhall have a proper occaſion to proſecute more fully in the following diſcourſes concerning the education of children, to which I refer it. SERM. L.

Upon all theſe conſiderations and many more that might be urged upon us, we ſhould take up the pious reſolution of Joſhua here in the text, that "we and OUR HOUSES will ſerve the LORD:" and that, through GOD's grace, we will do all that in us lies by our future care and diligence to repair our former neglects in this kind.

I ſhall only add this one conſideration more to all that I have already mentioned: if children were carefully educated, and families regularly and religiouſly ordered, what a happy and delightful place, what a paradiſe would this world be, in compariſon of what now it is?

I beſeech

SERM. L.

I beſeech you therefore, brethren, that theſe things which I have with ſo much plainneſs and faithfulneſs laid before you, may ſink into your hearts, before it be too late, and whilſt the thing may be remedied; that you may not for ever lament this neglect and repent of it, when the thing will be paſt remedy, and there will be no place for repentance. "But I hope better things of you, bre-"thren, and things that accompany ſalvation, "though I thus ſpeak."

A Table of the Texts of each Sermon.

SERMON XXXV.

MATTH. xxv. 46. *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* page 3.

SERMON XXXVI.

ECCLES. ix. 11. *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battel to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.* p. 26.

SERMON XXXVII.

JEREMIAH vi. 8. *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.* p. 55.

SERMON XXXVIII.

ACTS xxiv. 16. *And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, towards* GOD, *and towards men.* p. 81.

SERMON XXXIX.

ZECH. vii. 5. *Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, when ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years,* DID YE AT ALL FAST UNTO ME, EVEN UNTO ME? p. 107.

SERMON XL.

PSALM lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* p. 185.

SERMON XLI.

JEREM. ix. 23, 24. *Thus saith the* LORD, *let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might: let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the* LORD, *which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the* LORD. p. 162.

SERMON XLII.

TIT. iii. 2. *To speak evil of no man.* p. 189.

SERMON XLIII.

JOHN i. 14. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of*

of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. p. 221.

SERMON XLIV.

JOHN i. 14. *The Word was made flesh.* p. 247.

SERMON XLV.

JOHN i. 14. *The Word was made flesh.* p. 284.

SERMON XLVI.

JOHN i. 14. *The Word was made flesh.* p. 304.

SERMON XLVII.

HEB. ix. 6. *But now once hath he appeared in the end of the world, to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* p. 330.

SERMON XLVIII.

1 TIM. ii. 5. *For there is one* GOD. p. 358.

SERMON XLIX.

JOSH. xxiv. 15.—*But as for me and my house, we will serve the* LORD. p. 397.

SERMON L.

JOSH. xxiv. 15.—*But as for me and my house, we will serve the* LORD. p. 420.

The End of the Third Volume.

Juſt publiſhed the tenth Edition, with conſiderable Improvements,

An Univerſal Etymological

ENGLISH DICTIONARY;

Comprehending the Derivations of the Generality of Words in the Engliſh Tongue, either Ancient or Modern, from the Ancient Britiſh, Saxon, Daniſh, Norman, and Modern French, Teutonic, Dutch, Spaniſh, Italian; as alſo from the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew Languages, each in their proper Characters.

And alſo a brief and clear Explication of all difficult Words, derived from any of the aforeſaid Languages, and Terms of Art, relating to Anatomy, Botany, Phyſick, Pharmacy, Surgery, Chymiſtry, Philoſophy, Divinity, Mathematicks, Grammar, Logick, Rhetorick, Muſick, Heraldry, Maritime Affairs, Military Diſcipline, Horſemanſhip, Hunting, Hawking, Fowling, Fiſhing, Gardening, Huſbandry, Handicrafts, Confectionary, Carving, Cookery, &c.

Together with a large Collection and Explication of Words and Phraſes uſed in our ancient Statutes, Charters, Writs, Old Records, and Proceſſes in Law; and the Etymology, and Interpretation of the Proper Names of Men, Women, and Remarkable Places in Great-Britain: Alſo the Dialects of our different Countries. Containing many Thouſand Words more than either Harris, Philips, Kerſey, or any Engliſh Dictionary before extant.

To which is added, a Collection of our moſt common Proverbs, with their Explication and Illuſtration.

The whole Work compiled and methodically digeſted, as well for the Entertainment of the Curious, as the Information of the Ignorant; and for the Benefit of young Students, Artificers, Tradeſmen, and Foreigners, who are deſirous thoroughly to underſtand what they Speak, Read, or Write.

By N. BAILEY, Φιλόλογος.

Printed for *R. Ware*, *A. Ward*, *J.* and *P. Knapton*, *T. Longman*, *R. Hett*, *C. Hitch*, *J. Hodges*, *S. Auſten*, *J.* and *H. Pemberton*, and *J. Rivington*. 2

393

404

406

409

416

418